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Theodore Stanton,
from the Author.

Paris, Sept., 1884.



A MANUAL OF FRENCH PROSODY.

A
MANUAL OF FRENCH PROSODY
FOR THE USE OF ENGLISH
STUDENTS.

BY
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Theodore Stanton
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P R E F A C E.

IT has for some time seemed to me singular that English boys should be expected to read and appreciate French verse by the light of the *intellectus sibi permissus*; while no one dreams of applying the same system, or rather want of system, to the study of Sophocles or Catullus. Doubtless the Greek and Latin metres are more intricate than the French; yet it may be questioned, on the other hand, whether they are not more natural to the English ear. At any rate, it may safely be asserted that French prosody, being untaught, remains in most cases unknown, and French verse continues to be to the French-reading and French-speaking Englishman a mysterious kind of prose.

There are excellent French treatises on versification, notably those of Pierre Richelet, M. Napoléon Landais, M. de Banville, and M. Mainard, on which the present little book is principally based. But from the standpoint of an Englishman, still more of an English boy, these books are at once inadequate and over-elaborate. They lack the explanations required by the foreigner, whose ear is attuned to other combinations; they enter into details of taste unnecessary to a beginner; and they are tainted with the party spirit of the controversy between Classicism and Romanticism.

This little book pretends to no originality save in its

object, which is to teach English readers of French poetry what the rules of that poetry are.

If any critic should object, that I am too dogmatic about controverted points, especially of current French pronunciation, I must plead the limited space, which did not admit of my stating in full views I did not accept, however long I may have hesitated, or however doubtful I may have felt in deciding against them.

ARTHUR GOSSET.

CONTENTS.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Chap. I. Quantity | 1 |
| II. Accent | 3 |
| III. Definition of a French Verse | 10 |
| IV. Of the Assonant Vowel | 13 |
| V. Of the Terminations of Verses, and of Masculine and Feminine Verses and Rhymes | 19 |
| VI. Termination continued. Sequel. Consonance | 34 |
| VII. Support. Resonance | 45 |
| VIII. Further remarks on Rhyme | 61 |
| IX. How to Count the Syllables in the Body of the Verse | 65 |
| X. The Scanning of Diphthongs | 78 |
| XI. The Different Verses possible in French | 84 |
| XII. Of certain fixed Forms of French Poetry | 95 |
| XIII. On some Miscellaneous Points of Pronunciation, Dic- tion, and Style | 108 |

ERRATUM.

P. 89, last line, for *Carnées* read *Camées*.

MANUAL OF FRENCH PROSODY FOR THE USE OF ENGLISH STUDENTS.

CHAPTER I.

QUANTITY.

THE differences of quantity between French syllables are far too slight to admit of metres being founded on them, as in Greek and Latin. Therefore it may be laid down, that FRENCH VERSIFICATION IS NOT QUANTITATIVE.

The difference of length between two French syllables containing the *same* vowel sound is not sufficient to prevent their rhyming. Thus the second syllables of the words *abaisse*, *promesse*, contain the same vowel sound, *open e*, but the spelling *ai* is supposed to indicate a slightly longer pronunciation than the spelling *e*. Yet the following is a good rhyme (RACINE, *Andromaque*, iv. 5):—

Est-il juste, après tout, qu'un conquérant s'abaisse
Sous la servile loi de garder sa promesse?

Some theorists forbid rhymes between syllables, whose difference of length is marked by a circumflex accent. The distinction of quantity between the vowel sound *a* in the first syllables of *âme* and *femme* is greater than that between

abaisse and *promesse*. However, the practice of poets of every school sanctions such rhymes.

La peur d'un vain remords trouble cette grande âme :
Elle flotte, elle hésite ; en un mot, elle est femme.

RACINE, *Athalie*, iii. 3.

Si je ne vous vois pas comme une belle femme
Marcher, vous bien porter,
Rire, et si vous semblez être une petite âme
Qui ne veut pas rester,

V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*. Novembre, x.

The French distinguish the quantity of *different* vowel sounds by calling them more or less *full*. Thus *ou*, *ui*, and *open e* are more full than *oi* ; *oi* is more full than *i*, or *a*, or *u* ; and these last than *acute e*, which is the thinnest of the French sonorous vowels. This distinction leads to certain differences in the amount of *support* which these vowels require to enable them to form rhymes. See Chapter VII.

Mute e, even when fully pronounced, as in the pronoun *le* after imperatives (*donnez-le, rendez-le, &c.*), is short compared with all sonorous vowels, and absolutely incapable of forming a rhyme. However, the differences in pronunciation caused by the mute syllables fall rather under the head of accent, to which we will pass.

CHAPTER II.

ACCENT.

THERE are two opinions as to the *accentuation* of French words, *which has nothing to do with the signs ' ' ^, called accents in French grammars, and used to supply the want of letters to express all the actual vowel sounds.* One is, that there is no distinction in point of accent between different French syllables, except (a) the great difference between a mute syllable, as the first of *serai* and the second of *parle*, and a sonorous syllable, as the second of *serai* and the first of *parle*; (b) the much smaller difference between a syllable followed by a sonorous, and a syllable followed by a mute syllable. Thus in *Je te parle parfois*, the mute syllable *je* is accented *as compared* with the mute *te*, because *je* is, and *te* is not followed by a mute syllable. For the same reason the sonorous syllable *par* is accented rather in *parle* than in *parfois*.

The other opinion admits between sonorous syllables not followed by mute ones a difference in favour of those which end words. According to this, in *parfois* the second syllable *fois* is accented rather than the first *par*. As a matter of history this is, no doubt, correct, but it may be questioned whether this accent really survives in modern French.

What is much more important for our purpose, than to

decide between these opinions, is to remark that the fact of disagreement is the best possible proof of the vagueness and slightness of the French tonic accent. An Englishman accustomed to what the French call the violent English accent, and to a system of versification depending on it, will go little, if at all, wrong in accepting the simple statement of some authors, that French is *une langue homotone*, an accentless language. At any rate, unlike English verse, FRENCH VERSE IS NOT ACCENTUAL.

It follows from this, that French Verse is properly measured not by *feet* or *beats*, but by *syllables*. And it must be possible to say of any French line with certainty, how many metrical syllables it contains. This is best shown by actual comparison.

Mr. Swinburne's *Hymn to Proserpine*, and La Fontaine's Dedication of his Fables to the Dauphin are both written in couplets, or as the French say *rimes plates*, in which every line is of the same metrical length. But Mr. Swinburne would never think of telling us how many syllables there were in his lines, but only how many *beats* or *metrical accents*—in this case six. And in fact the first line of his poem contains sixteen, the second fourteen syllables.

I have li'ved long enou'gh, having se'en one thi'ng, that lov'e has an
e'nd :

Go'ddess and mo'ther and que'en, be ne'ar me no'w and befri'end.

On the other hand, La Fontaine would have told us that he was writing in Alexandrines or twelve-syllabled lines. And his Dedication must therefore contain nothing but lines, in which neither more nor less than twelve metrical syllables.

(according to the rules of Prosody to be given hereafter) are to be found.

Je|chan-|te|les|hé-|-ros|don-|-t É-|-so-|-pe est|le|père ;
 Trou-|-pe|de|qui|l'his-|-toi-|-re, en-|-cor|que|men-|-son-|-gère,
 Con-|-tient|des|vé-|-ri-|-tés|qui|ser-|-vent|de|le-|-çons.
 Tout|par-|-le en|mon|(n)ou-|-vra-|-ge, et|mê-|-me|les|pois-|-sons :

If a verse could be found containing eleven or thirteen metrical syllables, the whole poem would fall to the ground and collapse into prose.

A French poem need not be written throughout in lines of the same metrical length. Thus the *Fables* of La Fontaine are written in what are called *Vers Libres*, and the very first of them contains a line of three syllables,—

Tout l'été,

which has no line of corresponding length in the whole fable. Wordsworth's poem, "My heart leaps up when I behold," has also the line,—

A ra'inbow i'n the sk'y,

without any other of corresponding metrical length, three beats.

But the same line preceded by *and*—

And a ra'inbow i'n the sk'y,

would still be a verse of the same metrical length ; whereas

Et tout l'été,

is a four-syllabled line, and essentially and inevitably different in metrical length from

Tout l'été.

It is true that the words, "And a rainbow in the sky," may be so pronounced as to make a verse of different metrical length,—

A'nd a ra'inbow i'n the sk'y.

But this only brings out more clearly the difference of French or syllabic, and English or accentual verse. For the new verse differs from "A ra'inbow i'n the sk'y," not only in metrical length, but in quality; it is trochaic, instead of iambic. Now this difference cannot in any way be represented in French verse; the genius of the language is utterly repugnant to it.

Add a syllable like *et* to the beginning, or a syllable like *fuit* to the end of

Tout l'été,

which it would be nearly impossible to do to

A ra'inbow i'n the sk'y ;

and all you can say of the new line,

Et tout l'été,

or the new line,

Tout l'été fuit,

is that it is a line of four instead of three syllables, and that you like or dislike its sound. Neither can be called trochaic or iambic.

However, as the principal metre for long English poems is an iambic pentameter, or verse of five beats, and this metre favours in a peculiar degree a regular number of syllables, namely, two to a beat—and as, on the other hand, long French poems are generally written in metres with an even number of syllables—there is a temptation to speak of

these latter metres by what Cardinal Newman happily calls an accommodation, as verses of six feet or five feet, instead of twelve or ten syllables. And the French themselves sometimes speak of feet (meaning combinations of two syllables), by accommodation to the phraseology of Greek and Latin verse. But the use of the words *feet* or *iamb*s in writing of French verse is very misleading to readers accustomed to the quantitative feet of Greek and Latin and the accentual feet of English and German. Let the reader therefore cast away all thought in French Prosody of *feet* and *iamb*s, and speak like M. de Banville (*Petit Traité de Poésie Française*) of *syllables* only. FRENCH VERSIFICATION, THEN, IS SYLLABIC.

Because syllabic, French verse is essentially rhyming or assonant, and all attempts at French blank verse are to be eschewed. It may be said that English rhyming poetry is in three dimensions, rhythm, rhyme, and metre; hence it can drop one dimension, rhyme, and remain, as it were, visible. But French verse has only two dimensions, rhyme and metre; so that, if one takes away the rhyme, it becomes invisible—in other words, indistinguishable from prose.

The reader must beware of supposing that *rhythme* in French ever means rhythm in the sense in which we talk of an anapæstic, a trochaic, or an iambic rhythm. *Rhythme* and its adjective *rhythmique* are used to describe ingenious combinations of long and short words, alliteration, and so on. But in a strict and technical sense, as when M. de Banville speaks of a poem as written “sur un beau *rhythme* emprunté à Ronsard,” *rhythme* is merely the French for *metre*.

From this fundamental distinction between French and

English verse flow innumerable consequences, which the reader will find out for himself.

Here we will only mention a few. (a) A scrap of French verse, free from alliteration and inversion, and not exhibiting a rhyme, is good prose; whereas a similar scrap of English verse would probably be called "sing-song" on account of its regular accents. (b) French verse is much more easily set to music or written to music than English, because the longer and shorter notes may be applied indifferently to any syllables except the rhyming ones, and *vice versa*. In English the musical and metrical rhythm must coincide, instead of which, in French, the verses receive their rhythm from the music for the first time. The French are often said to attach more importance to time in singing than other nations: is not this because they find in it the rhythm, which other nations have already in their accental verse, before it is sung? (c) French verse lends itself far more readily to recitation and acting than English or Latin or Greek, because the reciter or actor has far more scope for his personality in dealing with French syllables, than he can have with syllables which differ from one another essentially in value, apart from his own choice. One may almost compare a French actor to an Oriental king whose subjects are all equal, the Englishman to a mediæval one constantly checked by the intrinsic importance of this or that powerful vassal. It is therefore natural enough that the one homotonic language of Europe should be admittedly that, which has been most distinguished by acting. (d) As all syllables in modern French verse are in a sense equal, it is natural that it tends to assimilate itself more and more

to the plastic arts, in which a whole is formed out of homogeneous materials. The old assonant poetry, in which there lingers much of the Latin accent, is in this respect nearer English verse, in which, by the force of the tonic accent, a word other than a particle is a separate organism, with a history and character of its own. But these comparisons would lead us too far. Let us come back to the definition of French verse.

CHAPTER III.

DEFINITION OF A FRENCH VERSE.

M DE BANVILLE'S admirable definition (*Petit Traité*, Chapter I.) leaves nothing to be desired. "A French Verse is merely the union of a certain regular number of syllables, divided in some sorts of verse by a pause called *cæsura*, and always terminated by a sound which only exists at the end of one verse on condition of being reproduced at the end of one or more other verses, which repetition is called Rhyme."

I. Observe, that a "regular" number of syllables does not mean a number equal to that in the rhyming verse, for two verses of very different lengths may rhyme together.

Je demeure immobile, et mon âme abattue
Cède au coup qui me tue.

CORNEILLE, *Le Cid*, i. 7.

L'espoir vers Dieu se tourne et Dieu l'entend crier.
Laissez tout ce qui pleure
Prier.

V. HUGO, *Quatre Vents de l'Esprit*, iii. 10.

A "regular" number means (a) a number less than fourteen; (b) a number distinctly intended by the author and known to the reader; (c) a number which, except in *Vers Libres*, corresponds to that in some other line in the same

poem. Thus the unequal rhyming lines quoted above correspond in length to those in the same part of every other stanza of the respective poems.

II. Notice, above all, that every line of French verse must have another to rhyme (or in the old assonant poetry to be assonant) with it; whereas, in English rhymed poetry, it is not necessary for every verse to rhyme. For instance, the first line of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* does not rhyme :—

It is an ancient mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
“ By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me ? ”

However, this kind of half-rhymed metre is not very fashionable now in England, and has always been considered rather appropriate to ballads and hymns than to more ambitious flights. In France, too, there are popular ballads and songs with next to no rhyme or assonance, like the celebrated “ *Malbrouk s'en va t'en¹ guerre.* ”

The reason is, that the tune is here simultaneous with or antecedent to the words, and supplies the rhythm which is lacking in written French poetry. But this popular ballad verse is entirely separate from the literary poetry of France, and does not enter into our subject. See Dr. Scheffler's “ *Französische Volks-dichtung und Sage.* ” Leipzig, 1884.

In La Fontaine's *Fables* there is an instance of a line without a rhyme in *La Cour du Lion*, vii. 7 :—

Et, flatteur excessif, il loua la colère.

¹ The *t* in *va t'en* is really the Latin *t* of *vadit*, which in literary French only appears in the interrogative form, *va-t-il*.

But this is an exception, which by its extreme rarity proves the rule. La Fontaine is in every respect the freest of the French poets, and that he should only once have transgressed this rule is the best proof of its stringency.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE ASSONANT VOWEL.

THE correspondence of termination, which constitutes rhyme, may exist in very different degrees. The two English words "beak," "meet," and the two French words "arbre," "cadavre," have respectively a certain similarity of termination, because in the English pair the vowel sound represented by *ea* or *ee*, and in the French pair the vowel sound *a* in the last sonorous syllable, is common to both. Such a similarity is called *assonance*; and it may be said that as rhyme is *l'unique harmonie* (Sainte-Beuve) of French verse, so is assonance the soul of rhyme. In the *Chanson de Roland* (eleventh century), and in other poetry of the first French period which has not survived in its original form, the versification is *merely* assonant. The *Chanson de Roland* consists of a number of strains of unequal length. Each strain is composed of a number of ten-syllabled lines with a strong cæsura at the end of the fourth syllable, corresponding only in the fact that they are either all masculine or all feminine (see next chapter), and that the last sonorous vowel sound in each line is the same. Probably the chants to which the poem was sung changed at the end of every strain.

Here are some lines of a feminine strain assonant in *i*, from the third canto :—

Rollans ferit || en une perre *bise*,
 Plus en abat || que jo ne vos sai *dire*
 L'espee cruist, || ne fruisset ne ne *brise*,
 Cuntre le ciel || amunt est *resortie*,

and so on, with such assonances as *reliques*, *Denise*, *Marie*, &c.

However, by the thirteenth century this assonant poetry had given place to a rhymed poetry essentially the same in character as the modern, and *mere* assonance was relegated to popular or rustic verse. It may be remarked that Spain is the country where assonant poetry has best succeeded in maintaining a recognized position in literature.

A mistake in assonance is worse than any other, and such rhymes as *love*, *grove*, *move*, are more grievous to the ear than *love*, *mud*, *cut*. The perpetual changes of vowel sound which have characterized the whole history of the English language, have served to excuse in our modern poetry a host of non-asonant rhymes, in other words, of no-rhymes, by the example of poets in whose time the words in question were really assonant.

French vowels have changed much less in historical times. Nasals are much more differentiated from their corresponding simples, than when it was sung of the dying Roland:—

Seint Gabriel de sa main il l'ad *pris*,
 Desur sun braz teneit le chef *enclin*,

and so on, where the simple *i* and the nasal *in* are assonant.

Consequently nasal and simple vowels never rhyme together in modern French.

There are also a number of rhymes, common till the eighteenth century, which have become impossible, owing

to the change of the diphthong *oi*, which represents either the attraction of an *i* by an *o* in another syllable, *testimónium*, *témoin*; or the Latin long accented *e*, *régem*, *roi*; or short accented *i*, *míhi*, *moi*. This digraph was pronounced sometimes *è*, sometimes *oué*, sometimes *ouè*, according to the letters surrounding it. But the Parisian pronunciation, vulgar in the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, was nearer *oua*, and this has triumphed over the old pronunciation, except in the word *roide* or *raide*, which is usually pronounced *rède*, and in the terminations of verbs and adjectives where it was pronounced *è*, and through Voltaire's influence is now written *ai*: *aimait*, *aimaient*, *français*, *anglais*, &c. No one can now rhyme *croître* with *maître*, that is, make *oua* assonant to *è*. But in the seventeenth century the pronunciation was *crêtre*.

Quel plaisir d'élever un enfant qu'on voit croître
Non plus comme un esclave élevé pour son maître,

RACINE; *Andromaque*, iv. 1.

The number of possible assonances in modern French is pretty nearly that of the vowel sounds. Omitting *e* mute, which can never form a rhyme, and all distinctions of short and long, we have *a*, acute *e*, open *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, *oi*, *ou*, *eu*, and the nasals *an*, *in*, *on*, *un*, *oin*, *ien*.

Of course these fifteen vowel sounds may be written in many different ways. *A* is written as *e* in *femme*. Acute *e* is written without an accent in the terminations of *aimer*, *aimez*; as *ai* in *gai*, *serai*. Open *e* has no accent in *elle*, and is written *ei* in *veine*, in which cases it is considered short; it is also written with a circumflex in *rêve*, and as *ai* in *aimais*. *O* is often found in the form *au* or *eau*. Nasal *en*

and *nasal an* are generally accounted the same for purposes of rhyme. *Eu* is written as *ue* in *cueillir*, as *œu* in *cœur*, as *æ* in *œil*. *Nasal in* is written *aim* in *faim*, *ain* in *certain*, and *ein* in *dessein*.

Before most of these vowels an *i* may stand, as in *diacre*, *ciel*, *vieux*, *pioche*, *ancien*. This use of *i* is so characteristic of the French language, and we shall have so often occasion to speak of these composite vowels, that it will be convenient to use the general term *iotized* vowels. Iotized vowels are assonant with their corresponding simples.

Pour le faire expliquer tendons-lui quelque piège,
Mais quel indigne emploi moi-même m'imposé-je !

RACINE, *Bajazet*, iv. 4.

Chevaux et chevaliers sont des armures vides,
Mais debout. Ils ont tous encor le geste fier,
L'air fauve, et quoiqu'étant de l'ombre, ils sont du fer.

V. HUGO, *Légende des Siècles*. *Eviradnus*, viii.

The student must distinguish between the iotized form of the nasal *an* or *en*, which is sometimes written *ien*, especially before *t* or *ce*, as *O-ri-ent*, *pa-ti-en-ce*, and the iotized form of the nasal *in*, which is always written *ien*, except in words like *Li-by-en*, where *y* = *i*.

The former *ien* is dissyllabic, and can be assonant with its simple, as in Racine's *Bajazet*, i. 1 :—

Que ton retour tardait à mon impati-ence !
Et que d'un œil content je te vois dans Byzance !

This *ien* is a mere transcript from the Latin, *ori-entem*, *pati-entiam*, &c.

The other *ien* never represents the Latin letters *i-en*, is often monosyllabic, and never rhymes with its simple.

Faisons nos intérêts de ceux de leur famille ;
En l'une je suis femme, en l'autre je suis fille,
Et tiens à toutes deux par de si forts *li-ens*,
Qu'on ne peut triompher que par les bras des *miens*.

CORNEILLE, *Horace*, iii. 1.

In the same way, in virtue of the *u* sound patent in *ou* and *u* and latent in *o*, we get what may be called the *hypsi-lonized* vowels, *oui*, *ui*, *oe*, &c., as in *oui*, *nuit*, *moelle*. These are assonant not only with themselves, but with their simples, and with the other kind of hypsi-lonized vowel.

Considère, Phénix, les troubles que j'évite ;
Quelle foule de maux l'amour traîne à sa suite

RACINE, *Andromaque*, ii. 5.

Le navire
Est à l'eau :
Entends rive
Ce gros flot
Que fait luire
Et bru-ire
Le vieux sire
Aquilo.

SWINBURNE, *Chastelard*.

Quand, liguée et terrible et rapportant la nuit,
Toute l'Europe accourt, gronde et s'évanou-it.

V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*. Prologue.

However, the vowels *oi* and *nasal oin*, or hypsi-lonized *a* and *nasal in*, never rhyme with their simple forms, nor does *oi* rhyme with the dissyllable *ou-a*. In *oin*, and still more in *oi*, the simple vowel is somewhat altered in character. Perhaps the only false assonance that French poets of any importance permit themselves, is that between *acute* and *open e* in such words as *chercher*, *cher* ; *aimer*, *mer* ; *lever*, *hiver*. This most unpleasant discord, though rare in Racine, is

found often in Ronsard ; but in his case, as with our own old poets, we must remember that he may have been justified or excused by the pronunciation of his time.

Et, quand tu porterais, en lieu d'humaine *chair*,
Au fond de l'estomac, pour un cœur un *rocher* ;

Voyage de Tours.

These rhymes are sometimes called Norman rhymes, because according to the pronunciation of that province they are really assonant. The Norman origin of a large proportion of the older poets may help to account for their prevalence. However, this false assonance may be also found in modern poets, though with them inexcusable. Still this is nothing to the hosts of false rhymes current in modern English poetry, under the pretence of a similarity of spelling. There is no point in which French verse is more superior to our own rhymed verse than in the purity of its assonances.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE TERMINATIONS OF VERSES, AND OF MASCULINE AND FEMININE VERSES AND RHYMES.

THE assonant vowel and all that part of the verse, if any, which follows it, form the *termination*, which is treated in quite a different manner from the rest of the line.

The assonant vowel either stands in the last syllable of the verse, or is followed by one mute syllable.

In the former case the line is called a Masculine Verse, and the rhyme a Masculine Rhyme ; in the latter the Verse and Rhyme are called Feminine. For instance, in the *Souvenir* of Alfred de Musset is the following stanza :—

Oui, jeune et belle encor, plus belle, osait-on *dire*,
Je l'ai vue, et ses yeux brillaient comme *autrefois*,
Ses lèvres s'entrouvraient, et c'était un *sourire*,
Et c'était une *voix*.

Here the second and fourth lines are masculine verses, because the assonant vowel in *autrefois*, *voix*, is not followed by a mute syllable ; and for the same reason the rhyme in *ois*, *oix*, is called a masculine rhyme. The derivation of the expressions masculine verse, masculine rhyme, is of course from the fact, that substantives not ending in a mute syllable are generally of the masculine gender ; but this derivation does not affect the use of the terms masculine verse, mascu-

line rhyme, for in the present case the verses and rhyme are rightly called masculine, though the words *autrefois*, *voix*, are respectively an adverb and a feminine substantive.

In like manner, the first and third lines of this stanza are called feminine verses, and the rhyme in *-ire* a feminine rhyme, though the words *dire* and *sourire*, which contain that rhyme, are respectively a verb and a masculine substantive.

As feminine lines must end in one of three ways, in *e mute* alone, in *e mute* followed by *s*, or in *e mute* followed by the *nt* of the third personal plural, and as in each of these three cases it may be either *supported* or not by a consonant intervening between it and the assonant vowel, there are six classes of *feminine terminations*, of each of which we will take an example.

Class I., *e mute* alone, supported by a consonant :—

J'entreprends de conter l'année épouvantable,
Et voilà que j'hésite, accoudé sur ma table.

V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*.

Class II., *e mute* alone, unsupported by a consonant :—

Ils sont, grâces aux dieux, dignes de leur patrie ;
Aucun étonnement n'a leur gloire flétrie ;

CORNEILLE, *Horace*, iii. 5.

Class III., *e mute* followed by *s*, and supported by a consonant :—

Et moi, qui sur le trône ai suivi mes ancêtres,
Moi, fille, femme, sœur, et mère de vos maîtres.

RACINE, *Britannicus*, i. 2.

Class IV., *e mute* followed by *s*, and unsupported by a consonant :—

J'entends chanter de Dieu les grandeurs *infinies* ;
Je vois l'ordre pompeux de ses *cérémonies*.

RACINE, *Athalie*, ii. 7.

Class V., *e* mute followed by the *nt* of a third person plural, and supported by a consonant :—

Les forêts de nos cris moins souvent *rétentissent* ;
Chargés d'un feu secret, vos yeux *s'appesantissent*

RACINE, *Phèdre*, i. 1.

Class VI., *e* mute followed by the *nt* of a third person plural, and unsupported by a consonant :—

Il en parle tout bas aux princes, qui *sourient*.
La prière—le peuple aime que les rois *prient*—

V. HUGO, *Légende des Siècles*. *Ratbert, Les Conseillers*.

But the third persons plural of the present subjunctive of the verbs *avoir* and *être*, *aient*, *soient*, and the terminations *-aient*, *-raient*, of the third person plural of the imperfect indicative and conditional of all verbs are monosyllabic, and, if employed at the end of a verse, the rhyme and verse are considered masculine.

Si nos efforts te *délivraient*, (imperfect)
Tes baisers ressusciteraient (conditional)
Le cadavre de ton vampire.

BAUDELAIRE, *Le Vampire*.

Six percherons égaux, blancs et nourris d'avoine,
Traînaient un chêne entier dont les cimes *pendaient* ;
Et les larges pavés du faubourg Saint-Antoine
A chaque tour de roue en remuant *grondaient*.

SULLY-PRUDHOMME, *Dans la Rue*.

However, this kind of rhyme is generally avoided as heavy

and awkward. In the latter passage it is probably chosen to paint the lumbering movement described. And the same may perhaps be said of this couplet from Boileau's *Art Poétique*, describing the building of Thebes :—

Qu'aux accords d'Amphion les pierres se mouvaient,
Et sur les murs Thébains en ordre s'élevaient.

Art Poétique, iv. 249.

It should be observed, that in the *Chanson de Roland* these terminations are dissyllabic. But they ceased to be so at a very early date.

Rules for the employment of Masculine and Feminine Verses.

Rule I. There can be no rhyme, nor in the old assonant poetry assonance, between a masculine and a feminine verse, though their terminations may be so similar as to be hardly distinguishable from each other in ordinary conversation, as in the masculine and feminine participles, *aimé, enflammée*, or to constitute puns, as in the words *mère, mer*.

II. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century masculine and feminine verses must be so intermingled, that in no poem, or at least in no stanza, shall two masculine verses or two feminine verses meet without rhyming.

Thus, one of Théophile Gautier's best known songs begins with the quatrain :—

Dites, la jeune belle, (feminine)
Où voulez-vous aller? (masculine)
La voile ouvre son aile, (feminine)
La brise va souffler. (masculine)

Now, if the poet had wished to continue on the *same* masculine rhyme *ler*, there would have been nothing to

prevent him ; but wishing to *change* the rhyme, he could only continue with a feminine verse thus :—

L'aviron est d'ivoire, (feminine)
Le pavillon de moire, (feminine)

but here wishing to *change* the rhyme he must introduce a masculine line—

Le gouvernail d'or fin ; (masculine)

he is now able to introduce a new feminine rhyme—

J'ai pour lest une orange, (feminine)
Pour voile une aile d'ange, (feminine)
Pour mousse un séraphin. (masculine)

But the apparent line formed by the repetition in the poem called *Rondeau* of the first words after the eighth line, and again at the end, is not counted as a line for the purposes of this rule, or of that which requires that every line should have a line to rhyme with it.

Thus, in one of Alfred de Musset's *Rondeaux* the eighth line and refrain are—

Moi, je la berce ; un plus charmant *métier*
Fut-il *jamais* ?

Here, *Fut-il jamais* is repeated from the beginning of the *Rondeau*—

Fut-il jamais douceur de cœur pareille—

Short epigrams and other fugitive scraps of verse are exempt from this rule. Thus, Corneille's lines on the death of Richelieu are all masculine—

Qu'on parle mal ou bien du fameux cardinal,
Ma prose ni mes vers n'en diront jamais rien ;
Il m'a fait trop de bien pour en dire du mal,
Il m'a fait trop de mal pour en dire du bien.

And so are Boileau's lines on Corneille's senile tragedies :—

Après l'*Agésilas*,
Hélas !
Mais après l'*Attila*,
Holà !

A few modern poets, and notably Baudelaire, have written whole poems in masculine verses, or in feminine verses respectively, without any mixture of the other kind. But when they combine the two sorts, they observe the rule strictly. Sometimes the rule is broken, as by Victor Hugo once or twice in the *Châtiments*, for the sake of the tune to which the words are written.

But down to the time of Ronsard (1524-1585) and his six friends, Belleau, Jodelle, Baïf, Daurat, du Bellay, and de Thiard, the Pleiad of the sixteenth century, this rule was not strictly enforced.

Douce maîtresse, touche,
Pour soulager mon mal,
Ma bouche de ta bouche
{ Plus rouge que coral ; }
{ Que mon col soit pressé }
De ton bras enlacé.

RONSARD.

Like most other rules of French Prosody, it owes its firm and final establishment to Malherbe (1556-1628), but it had been growing up gradually for a long time, and such an arrangement as the above is quite exceptional in Ronsard.

III. Different masculine or different feminine rhymes may not cross one another, even if the lines containing them are prevented from meeting by the interposition of lines of the other kind.

Thus (to return to Théophile Gautier's song) the following arrangement of the lines would be impossible :—

Dites, la jeune belle, 1. (feminine)
 Où voulez-vous aller ?
 L'aviron est d'ivoire, 2. (feminine)
 Le pavillon de moire, 2. (feminine)
 La brise va souffler;
 La voile ouvre son aile. 1. (feminine)

For (of course apart from the sense) this would involve the cutting of the feminine rhyme in *-elle* by the feminine rhyme in *-oire*. And the same objection would apply to a similar crossing of masculine rhymes.

Hence a French poet can never have more than two rhymes, so to speak, on hand at the same time, one masculine and one feminine. Such a combination of rhymes as this from Wordsworth would be impossible in French.

1. Now while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
2. And while the young lambs bound
2. As to the tabor's sound,
3. To me alone there came a thought of grief :
3. A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
1. And I again am strong.

The older poets, who allow the contact of two masculine or of two feminine lines on a different rhyme, also allow the crossing of two masculine or of two feminine lines, as in the celebrated lines of Villon (fifteenth century) :—

La pluie nous a debués et lavés
 Et le soleil dessechés et noircis ;
 Pies, corbeaux, nous ont les yeux cavés,
 Et arrachés¹ la barbe et les sourcils.

¹ In modern French this participle would be in the singular, because it precedes the direct object of the sentence "la barbe et les sourcils."

But the rule that not more than two rhymes can be in hand at the same time, or, to put it in different words, that when two rhymes are running together, one of them must be finished with before a third is introduced, is of universal application, in spite of the experiments of Fabri.

IV. In singing, the *e mute* at the end of a feminine verse is always sounded as *eu*, and distinctly pronounced as a separate syllable, to which a separate note (generally short) is assigned. Hence, in poetry intended to be sung, the distinction between a masculine and feminine verse is much the same as that between an English verse ending in an accented syllable and an English verse with an accent on the last syllable but one, as will appear by comparing the first verse of the *Marseillaise* with the current English version, which illustrates this point as well as if it were a masterpiece.

Allons ! enfants de la patri-e, (feminine)

Le jour de gloire est arrivé ; (masculine)

Contre nous de la tyranni-e (feminine)

L'étendard sanglant est levé. (masculine)

At last has broke the day of glóry, (accent on last syllable but one)

Then rise to meet it, sons of Fránce ; (accent on last syllable)

See the fatal flag, black and góry, (accent on last syllable but one)

Which the tyrant hosts advánce. (accent on last syllable)

However, there is this difference between a feminine rhyme and an English double rhyme as *-tri-e* and *glóry*, that the French *e mute*, whether alone, as in Classes I. and II. of feminine terminations, or followed by *s* or *nt* (Classes III. to VI.), has always exactly the same sound in singing, *eu* ; whereas in such words as *glóry*, *góry* ; *fáted*, *háted* ; *súnder*, *thúnder*, the unaccented final syllables differ from one

another both in their vowel sound and in the sound of their final consonants. Hence the English complain of the monotony of French singing, in which every feminine line ends with *eu*.

V. The mute syllable at the end of a feminine line is not pronounced in reading, reciting, or acting, save in so far as a *very* faint sound may be necessary to bring out the full pronunciation of the consonants (if any) supporting it. Thus, with such a feminine termination as *ombre* or *astre*, the final *e* mute is a little more audible than with endings in *ite* or *ée*.

VI. When we speak of the number of metrical syllables in verses, we never count the final mute syllable of feminine rhymes. Thus the two lines,

L'aviron est d'ivoire,
Le gouvernail d'or fin ;

are both said to be of six syllables, though the sixth syllable of the former, *voi*, is in fact followed by the mute syllable, *re*.

VII. The letters *s* and *nt* at the end of feminine verses receive no pronunciation whatever, either in singing, reading, reciting, or acting. Thus, in this line of the *Marseillaise*,

Tremblez, tyrans, et vous, *perfides*,

the last word is sung *per-fi-deŭ*, and read *perfid'*, without any regard to the *s*. So the lines from *Phèdre*, page 21, are recited :—

Les forêts de nos cris moins souvent *retentiss'* ;
Chargés d'un feu secret, vos yeux s'*appesantiss'*.

We are now in a position to form some opinion as to how far the distinction between masculine and feminine verses is

conventional. In singing, the difference is clearly real. A rhyme with an *eu* attached to it is obviously not the same as a monosyllabic rhyme.

Next, if we take the beginning of (say) Racine's *Andromaque*, and read the first sixteen lines, we shall see that the usual distinction between masculine and feminine verses in reading is that the former end in a vowel, the latter in a consonantal sound. The mute terminations of the feminine lines are here marked by apostrophes, and the mute consonants at the ends of the masculine lines are bracketed.

ORESTE.

Oui, puisque je retrouve un ami si fidèl',
 Ma fortune va prendre une face nouvell' ;
 Et déjà son courroux semble s'être a douci,
 Depuis qu'il a pris soin de nous rejoindre ici.
 Qui l'eût dit, qu'un rivage à mes vœux si funest'
 Présenterait d'abord Pylade aux yeux d'Orest' ;
 Qu'après plus de six mois, que je t'avais perdu,
 A la cour de Pyrrhus tu me serais rendu.

PYLADE.

J'en rends grâces au ciel, qui m'arrêtant sans cess'
 Semblait m'avoir fermé le chemin de la Grèce,
 Depuis le jour fatal que la fureur des eau(x)
 Prèsque aux yeux de l'Épire écarta nos vaisseau(x).
 Combien dans cet exil ai-je souffert d'alarm',
 Combien à vos malheurs ai-je donné de larm' ;
 Craignant toujours pour vous quelque nouveau dange(r),
 Que ma triste amitié ne pouvait partage(r).

In other words, in a long piece of poetry the terminations of the majority of feminine lines belong to Classes I., III., V. ; and those of a still larger majority of masculine lines end in sonorous vowels not followed by sonorous con-

sonants. But at the seventeenth line we are brought up by a feminine couplet (with the termination of Class II.), in which the last sounds are vowels, followed by a masculine couplet, in which the last sounds are consonants :—

Surtout j'ai redouté cette mélancoli'
Où j'ai vu si longtemps votre âme enseveli' ;
Je craignais que le ciel par un cruel secour(s)
Ne vous offrît la mort, que vous cherchiez toujours(s).

The feminine terminations of Classes II., IV., VI., are thus an exception to the general consonantal sound of a feminine rhyme in reading. These terminations can only be distinguished from analogous masculine ones, as *ensevelie* from *enseveli*, by a slight stress in pronunciation.

However, such terminations could till the seventeenth century be counted as forming two syllables in the body of a verse ; and we may remark that they often correspond to a *y* in some other inflection, as *envoie*, *envoyons*, *envoyez*. Hence it is not unlikely, that they once had a *y* sound, *enseveli-y'*, distinguishing them clearly to the ear from the similar masculine rhyme.

In the old assonant poetry, which, it must be remembered, was mainly oral, a facultative *d* could be inserted in the feminines of participles when metrically convenient. *Aimée* could be *aimé-de* (Spanish *amada*, Latin *amatam*). Compare *il aime* with *aime-t-il*, where the *t* corresponds to the *d* in *aimé-de*. It is only in words of modern formation, *incendie*, *impie*, &c., that the feminine termination does not correspond to a Latin desinence with a consonant ; *pie* is *pi-ca*, *louent lau-dant*, &c.

If we turn to masculine terminations in which there is a

sonorous consonant after the assonant vowel, we may observe that of such consonants the commonest are the liquids *l* and *r*. These letters are capable of a longer or shorter pronunciation, distinguishing feminine from masculine rhymes, *fatale, fatal*; *soupire, soupir*. However, even here there is reason to suspect that such finals were formerly in many instances mute. For, as Littré remarks (Preface to his Dictionary), the modern tendency is towards sounding final consonants formerly only heard in *liaison*. And the late M. Génin, in his preface to the *Chanson de Roland*, lays down, that the final consonants in early French were *never* pronounced out of *liaison*. Besides, it is otherwise difficult to explain how the vicious rhyme between *chair* and *rocher*, noticed on page 18, could ever have suggested itself. Ronsard very likely did not pronounce the *r* in *chair*, in which case the sound would approximate much more to that of *ché* in *rocher*.

At any rate, it is remarkable that the Southern French, who have always had a love for sonorous final consonants, have for some time been reversing, especially in literature, the old historic predominance of the North, where final consonants are generally suppressed.

The tendency to pronounce mute finals is most marked in the case of the letter *s*, which is now sounded, except by a few purists, in *fil*s, *mœur*s, *sens*, &c., quite against the usage of the seventeenth century. Other words, such as *alors*, *gens*, are passing through the transition period. To these mispronounced words have joined themselves a number of classical names, and a variety of neologisms from all languages, *Vénus*, *Pallas*, *rébus*, *omnibus*, *aloès*, &c. These words

ought to have been pronounced according to the genius of the old French language, *Vènu'*, *Palla'*, *rèbu'*, &c., out of *liaison*, and *Vènu-z*, *Palla-z*, *rèbu-z*, &c., in *liaison*—just as *Thomas* or *femmes* are not pronounced *Thomass'*, *femms'*, in spite of the *s* representing in them as much as in *Vènu*¹ a Latin *s*, *Thomas*, *feminas*.

However, if the pronunciation *Vènu**sse*, *Palla**sse*, &c., was to obtain, it would have been better to have adopted a corresponding spelling, and treated the endings as feminine in poetry. But this was not done; and all these words in sonorous *s* form an unpleasant class of hybrids, masculine by their spelling, and to be distinguished from such feminine terminations as *connusse*, *lasse*, by as rapid a pronunciation as the necessity of sounding the *s* allows. The ear certainly receives a shock, when these terminations strike on it, instead of the expected final vowel or slight *l* or *r*. Rhymes in other sonorous final consonants are also masculine, but they are not common nor marked enough to affect the general relation of masculine to feminine rhymes in reading and recitation; which is, that the masculine represent to the ear a fainter and usually vowel sound, the feminine a stronger and usually consonantal one. Since in French the rhyme is, as has been said by Sainte-Beuve,

————— l'unique harmonie
Du Vers. (Poésies de Joseph Delorme.)

this distinction, and the rules founded on it, seem to contribute variety to that harmony, and, on the whole, not to merit the blame of being merely conventional.

¹ In point of fact, the purest French for the Latin *Venus* would be *Vendre*, as in *Vendredi*, *Port-Vendres*.

M. Landais (*Dictionnaire des Rimes*) calls masculine lines *sourds*, dull or flat, compared with feminine, and notices as a consequence, that they are rarely suffered to stand three together, or to exceed in number the feminine lines combined with them in a stanza. Thus, in the six-lined stanza quoted from Théophile Gautier, "L'aviron est d'ivoire," &c., there are four feminine and two masculine lines. But the contrary arrangement would be neither usual nor pretty. In stanzas meant for singing, the last line is almost invariably masculine, because the short *eu* of the feminine line as sung seems to demand something to follow it. The same may be observed of English songs with a mixture of dissyllabic and monosyllabic rhymes. Each stanza generally ends with a monosyllabic rhyme.

It is important to remember that not only the final *s* and *nt* of feminine lines, but the final consonants of masculine rhymes, are never sounded in *liaison* with the beginning of the following line, though the latter may have an initial vowel, and be closely connected in sense with the final word of the former line. There is an absolute gulf fixed between the two lines by the pause necessary to bring out the rhyme at the end of the former. For the same reason there can be neither *elision* nor *hiatus* (Chap. IX.) between two verses. In singing

Dites, la jeune *belle*
Où voulez-vous aller ?

the pronunciation, *bel-leŷ*, is not affected by the vowel *où* at the beginning of the second line.

And the following sequence of lines from V. Hugo's *Le Roi s'Amuse*, i. 3, is not liable to any objection :—

Une chose à brouiller le plus sage cerveau !

Une chose admirable ! une chose risible !

Une chose amoureuse ! une chose impossible !

In this respect the termination is absolutely unlike the rest of the verse.

CHAPTER VI.

TERMINATION CONTINUED. SEQUEL. CONSONANCE.

IN order that two assonant syllables may rhyme in English, it is necessary that the assonant vowel should not be followed by different *sequels* in the words in question. Thus, though “beak” and “meet” are assonant, they do not rhyme, because the assonant vowel has in one word the sequel *k*, in the other the sequel *t*. To rhyme with “beak,” a word with the same sequel as “meek” is required. In the same way, to rhyme with “me,” we need a word in which, as in “me,” the assonant vowel has no sequel—“sea,” “thee,” &c. Let us call this agreement of sequel, or of want of sequel, *consonance*.

The general principles of consonance are the same in English and French, but the actual rules are more complicated in detail and uncertain in application in the latter language, owing to its mute final consonants and its *liaison*.

I. The simplest case of consonance is the absence of all sequel, as in the English “me,” “sea.” This, in French, can only occur in a masculine rhyme—

N’importe : poursuivons. Elle peut, comme moi,
Sur des gages trompeurs s’assurer de sa foi.

RACINE, *Bajazet*, iv. 4.

The letter *h* being essentially mute does not constitute a sequel—

Tout se mêle, Irmensul ressemble à Jéhovah :

Le sage stupéfait balbutie et s'en va.

V. HUGO, *Quatre Vents de l'Esprit*. Livre Satirique, iv.

And though in the abstract any true consonant is capable of sounding sometimes at the ends of words, yet if at the end of a particular word it is *never* sounded—as the *g* in *poing*, *coing*, or the *f* in *clef*, or only in a few special *liaisons*, as the *d* in *pied*,—such a word can be consonant to a word without a sequel. Some of these words can also be written without the consonant, as *clé*.

Je n'ai pas de miracle en bouteille sous clé ;

Mon vêtement n'est pas de diamants bouclé.

V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*. Juin.

Le cheval s'approchant lui donne un coup de pied ;

Le loup, un coup de dent ; le bœuf, un coup de corne.

Le malheureux lion, languissant, triste, et morne,

Peut à peine rugir, par l'âge estropié.

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, iii. 14.

II. Every *sound* in the sequel of a verse must exist in the sequel of the rhyming verse, and in the same place in the sequel, just as in English. The spelling of the sound is indifferent. Thus, in the following couplet—

Quand avec les Trois-cents, hommes faits ou pupilles,

Léonidas s'en va tomber aux Thermopyles,

* V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*. Prologue.

there is an excellent consonance, though the sound *l* is written *ll* in *pupilles* and *l* in *Thermopyles*. But though the sequel in *pupille* and in *famille* is written in the same way, *pupille* cannot rhyme with *famille*, because in *famille* the letters *ll* represent not *l*, but the sound called *mouillé*. To

rhyme with *famille* we require a sequel with the *mouillé* sound, such as *fille*.¹

Noble et brillant auteur d'une triste *famille*,
Toi, dont ma mère osait se vanter d'être *fille*,

RACINE, *Phèdre*, i. 3.

Here are some more instances of consonances with a sonorous sequel. With *f*—

Il se donnait en tout vingt coups de nerfs de *bœuf*,
Mon père pour sa part en emboursait dix-neuf.

RACINE, *Plaideurs*, i. 5.

With *tr*—

Pour bannir l'ennemi dont j'étais *idolâtre*,
J'affectai les chagrins d'une injuste *marâtre*.

RACINE, *Phèdre*, i. 3.

With *gn*—

Sa main *digne*,
Quand il *signe*,
Égratigne
Le vélin.

V. HUGO, *Odes et Ballades*. *Pas d'Armes du Roi Jean*. ^

The consonance of *gn* with *n* is false, at least according to modern pronunciation. Such a rhyme as this from a sonnet of Ronsard would not now be permitted:—

Un ris, qui l'âme aux astres *achemine*,
Une vertu de telle beauté *digne*,

The rhymes in *open* and *acute er* condemned in Chap. IV. are as false in consonance as in assonance, for the *r* of the *open* termination (*mer*, &c.) is pronounced always, while that of the *acute* termination (*aimer*) is never pronounced except in

¹ The reader may generally expect that *ll* from a Latin *ll* will sound like *l*: *Tranquillum*, *tranquille*; *pupillum*, *pupille*; *mille*, *mille*; *villam*, *ville*. Latin *li* becomes *mouillé*: *Filiam*, *fille*; *familiam*, *famille*.

liaison, in which the termination of a verse can never be. See end of last chapter.

So *cerf* (mute *f*) cannot rhyme with *serf*, nor *dot* (sonorous *t*) with *mot*.

A word ending in sonorous *s*, like *Vénus*, ought not to rhyme with a word in mute *s*, as *nus*. However, this being, according to our absurd English expression, a good rhyme to the eye, is freely used by many of the best modern poets,—

Agrafe autour des seins *nus*
De *Vénus*,

SAINTE-BEUVE.

Son pouce et son index faisaient dans les ténèbres
S'ouvrir ou se fermer les ciseaux d'Atropos ;
La radieuse paix naissait de son repos

V. HUGO, *Légende des Siècles. Le Satyre.*

This is no more a rhyme than “dose” and “grow” would be in English. Similar instances may be found in earlier poets :—

Jeune beauté, mais trop outrecuidée ¹
Des présents ² de *Vénus*,
Quand tu verras ta peau toute ridée
Et tes cheveux chenus.

RONSARD, *Odes*,

Hermione. Tous vos retardements sont pour moi des refus.
Courez au temple. Il faut immoler—

Oreste.

Qui ?

Hermione.

Pyrrhus.

RACINE, *Andromaque*, iv. 3.

But we cannot be certain that Ronsard and Racine said *Vénuss'*, *Pyrrhuss'*, like modern Parisians, as we know they

¹ Overweening.

² Our English word “ presents ; ” modern French *cadeaux* or *dons*.

did not say *fiss'*, or *senss'*, or *mœurss'*. If they really did say *Vénuss'*, *Pyrrhuss'*, they would probably have excused the bad^d rhyme by the scarcity of masculine rhymes in sonorous *s*. But the reason why they were rare was that they were opposed to the genius of the language. At any rate this excuse is no longer valid for modern poets with *omnibuss'*, *lotoss'*, *jadiss'*, *hélass'*, *aloèss'*, &c. It is now generally recognized that masculine terminations in sonorous *s* can only rhyme with propriety among themselves :—

Andromaque, des bras d'un grand époux tombée,
Vil bétail, sous la main du superbe Pyrrhus,
Auprès d'un tombeau vide en extase courbée ;
Veuve d'Hector, hélas ! et femme d'Hélénus !

BAUDELAIRE, *Le Cygne*.

M. Leconte de Lisle is very strict in observing this rule, which he has often occasion to do, as his poems are chiefly on classical or foreign subjects. In his lines on Hypatia, in *Poèmes Antiques*, he rhymes *lotos* (ss') with *Paros* (ss'), and *Hellas* (ss') with *Hélas !* (ss').

III. Mute consonants not absolutely final do not affect consonance. The following rhyme from Ronsard's *Voyage de Tours* is excellent :—

Puis, au Soleil penchant, nous conduirons nos *bœufs*
Boire le haut sommet des ruisselets *herbeux*.

for the *f* in the plural *bœufs* is mute. Compare the following couplets :—

Tous ces Normands voulaient se divertir de *nous* ;
On apprend à hurler, dit l'autre, avec les *loups*.

RACINE, *Plaideurs*, i. i.

Le jour fuit, la paix saigne, et l'amour est proscrit,
Et l'on n'a pas encor décloué Jésus-Christ.

V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*. Février.

On en vient au partage, on conteste, on chicane ;
Le juge sur cent points tour à tour les condamne.

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, iv. 18.

IV. But a word ending in a mute consonant capable of forming a *liaison* cannot rhyme with a word that does not end either with the same letter, or with another that would have the same sound in *liaison*, though actual *liaison* is absolutely out of the question at the end of a line.

Thus, final *s*, *x*, or *z* requires *s*, *x*, or *z* :—

Je suis jeune, il est vrai ; mais aux âmes bien nées
La valeur n'attend point le nombre des années.

CORNEILLE, *Cid*, ii. 2.

Aricie. Quel charme l'attirait sur ces bords redoutés ?

Ismène. Thésée est mort, madame, et vous seule en doutez.

RACINE, *Phèdre*, ii. 1.

Faut-il qu'en sa faveur j'embrasse vos genoux ?

Pour la dernière fois, sauvez-le, sauvez-vous.

RACINE, *Andromaque*, iii. 7.

T or *d* requires *t* or *d* :—

Toujours le même fait se répète ; il le faut.

Le trône abject s'adosse à l'illustre échafaud ;

V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*. Juin.

Moi je suis seul, et rien au monde

Ne me répond,

Rien que ta voix morne et profonde,

Sombre Hellespont !

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

C or *g* requires *c* or *g* :—

Il mêle avec l'orgueil, qu'il a pris dans leur sang,

La fierté des Nérons, qu'il puisa dans mon flanc.

RACINE, *Britannicus*, i. 1.

The other consonants need no illustration, as each requires itself.

V. It follows from Rule IV., that, as the *s* and the *t* of Classes III. to VI. of feminine rhymes admit in the abstract of *liaison*, there can be *no* feminine rhyme between a word of one class and a word of another; e.g., *Retentissent* (Class V.) cannot rhyme with *s'appesantisse* (Class I.), nor with *factices* (Class III.). *Ancêtres* (Class III.) cannot rhyme with *maître* (Class I.). *Sourient* (Class VI.) cannot rhyme with *prie* (Class II.), nor with *pries* (Class IV.). *Cérémonies* (Class IV.) cannot rhyme with *infinie* (Class II.). See p. 20.

This corollary of Rule IV. is rigorous, and admits of no exception.

VI. However, in masculine terminations, Rule IV. is sometimes neglected, especially where the consonant has no grammatical value, as the *s* of *corps* and the *t* of *effort*. But when final mute *s*, *x*, or *z* are the signs of a grammatical inflection, as in the plural of nouns, adjectives, and participles, and in the second persons of verbs, Rule IV. is peremptory, and has been so since the thirteenth century. Thus *coups* and *fous* make a good rhyme, *coup* and *fous* are never allowed to rhyme, *coup* and *fou* are admitted occasionally and by some poets, but under protest. A grammatical termination in *t* is less rigorously treated than one in *z*; one in *r* hardly less so than one in *s*. The scarcity of such words as *rang*, *sang*, *flanc*, and the fact that the *liaison* with the *k* sound is not very common in conversation, have induced most authors, except the great classical poets, Corneille, Racine, Boileau, and the modern Parnassians, M. de Banville, M. Catulle Mendès, &c., to let them rhyme freely with participles in *t*. As regards Rule IV., as in every other case,

La Fontaine in the seventeenth, and Alfred de Musset in the nineteenth century, exhibit the extreme of license. The Parnassians and the great classic poets, as we have said, meet on this point as rigorists. The followers of the classical school, as Voltaire, and the non-Parnassian modern poets, as Baudelaire, Théophile Gautier, M. Leconte de Lisle, M. Sully-Prudhomme, and V. Hugo himself, occupy intermediate positions. Baudelaire is rather lax, Gautier strict.

A few instances of exceptions to Rule IV. are subjoined; but it must be remembered that they are exceptions, and that all poets *prefer* to conform to the rule.

Tant s'en faut : de sa forme il se loua très *fort* ;
Glosa sur l'éléphant, dit qu'on pourrait *encor*
Ajouter à sa queue, ôter à ses oreilles.

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, i. 7.

Mais le peuple voudra des combats de taureau

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| * | * | * | * | * |
| * | * | * | * | * |

Mais on fait comme Escousse, ou allume un réchaud.

ALFRED DE MUSSET, *Rolla*.

C'est le Samson chrétien, qui survenant à *point*,
N'ayant pour enfoncer la porte que son *poing*,

V. HUGO, *Légende des Siècles*. *Éviradnus*.

Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son *houka*.

Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat.

BAUDELAIRE.

On voit tout cela dans les lignes

De cette paume, livre *blanc*

Où Vénus a tracé des signes

Que l'amour ne lit que *tremblant*.

TH. GAUTIER, *Émaux et Camées*.

The letter *s* at the end of the *first person singular* of verbs,

crois, dois, aimais, &c., has no etymological justification, and was introduced there in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the language was passing from its first to its second period, and was in confusion. Hence the classical poets and Victor Hugo drop this *s* frequently for the sake of the rhyme.

Oui, je vous ai promis et j'ai donné ma *foi*
De n'oublier jamais tout ce que je vous *doï* :

RACINE, *Bajazet*, iii. 5.

Le Roi. Au cul-de-sac Bussy.

M. de la Tour-Landry. Près de l'hôtel Cossé?

Le Roi. Dans l'endroit où l'on trouve un grand mur.

M. de la Tour-Landry. Ah ! je *sai*.

V. HUGO, *Le Roi s'Amuse*, i. 1.

By a similar license an *s* with no etymological meaning is occasionally dropped in feminine terminations of Class III. to bring them within Class I.

Il a pour fonction, à Paris comme à *Londre*,
De faire le progrès, et d'autres d'en *répondre*.

L'Année Terrible. Prologue.

But the following rhyme, where the English name Hobbes is deprived of its *s* to bring it into Class I., is perhaps rather an illustration of the freedom with which the French treat foreign words :—

Et l'espoir sur le front de *Hobbe* ;

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| * | * | * | * |
| * | * | * | * |

Toute la clémence de l'*aube*.

Légende des Siècles. Plein Ciel.

Rule IV. is a stumbling-block to foreigners. "How," they ask, "can the most logical people in the world absolutely exclude *liaison* between two different lines, and then

require such a consonance of rhyme as would only become audible in *liaison*?" It must be remembered that poetry is above all arts at the mercy of association. A Frenchman who is accustomed to pronounce *grands hommes*, *gran-zommes*, may feel a shock to his ideas at *grands* being offered him as a rhyme to *différent*, *tyran*, *rang*, which a foreigner unaccustomed to *liaison* cannot appreciate, but which may be very real and very deserving of respect. In the case of a plural, moreover, the *s* often, and perhaps in old times generally, represents a lengthening of the assonant vowel.

There is one letter in English, *r*, which admits in some cases of a sort of *liaison* in correct modern pronunciation. To pronounce the final *r* as a consonant in such a word as *beaver* before a consonant, or at the end of a sentence, "The beaver sat," or "I like that beaver," is a Scotch or Irish fault. Not to pronounce it as a consonant before a vowel, "The beaver is dead," is a cockneyism. Now, some years ago, *Punch* was very severe on a couplet from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in which some such word as "believer" rhymed with "Geneva," and called it a cockneyism. As, however, the unaccented vowels of the last syllables of "Geneva" and "believer" are the same in sound (*Genévah* instead of *Genèveu* being an undoubted cockneyism of the club type), and as the *r* in *believer* could not be sounded as a consonant at the end of the line in question except by a Scotchman or Irishman, the only objection to the rhyme was, that it made a word without a final *r* rhyme with a word ending in a final *r*, capable elsewhere, though not in the case in point, of a consonantal pronunciation. But this is precisely the ground of Rule IV.

My object here is neither to justify *Punch* nor the poet of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but to illustrate by the position taken up by the former, how the French have come to acquiesce more or less completely in Rule IV.

CHAPTER VII.

SUPPORT. RESONANCE.

ENGLISH accented terminations which are assonant and consonant to one another are always rhymes, unless they are preceded by the same consonantal sound, or by no consonantal sound. Thus *ball* and *call*, or *ball* and *awl*, constitute a rhyme, but *ball* does not rhyme with *bawl*, nor *all* with *awl*.

But there are many French terminations, assonant and consonant, which are not rhymes, or are, as they say, very weak, poor, or insufficient rhymes, unless they are preceded or *supported* (*appuyer*) by the same consonantal or vowel sound, and all French rhymes are better if so preceded. Thus *aimer* and *rocher* can hardly be said to rhyme at all; we require the supporting consonant, or, as the French say, *consonne d'appui*, to be the same, *aimer*, *ramer*, &c., *rocher*, *chercher*, &c. *Sombre* and *pénombre* are good rhymes, but *nombre* and *pénombre* are better. The French call such rhymes as *nombre* and *pénombre* rich, because the *consonne d'appui* is not necessary. But *rocher* and *chercher* are not said to rhyme richly, because *rocher* and *aimer* are hardly to be called rhymes at all. Nor are *choisir* and *vizir* rich rhymes, for such a rhyme as *choisir*, *souvenir*, though permissible, would be very poor. The word rich has, therefore, no precise sense, and it will be convenient for us to employ

the words *resonant* and *resonance* of all rhymes that are supported by the preceding consonant or vowel, whether the same rhyme without support would be good or not. Thus we shall call *levé* and *achevé* resonant, as well as *rime* and *crime*, though the latter pair of words make a rich rhyme, and the former do not.

As resonance is rather puzzling to an English ear, it will be as well to point out, before going further, the extent to which it is prohibited in English verse, which is often exaggerated, and to suggest some explanation of the divergence on this point of the two languages.

A. A resonant rhyme is always permissible in English when in one, or still better both of the words, the resonant sound is immediately preceded by a consonant pronounced with it and not found in the other word. Thus *crime* in English rhymes with *rhyme*, *gray* with *ray*, and still better with *pray*. But *prey* does not rhyme with *pray*, nor *ray* with *array*. Such resonant rhymes as are admitted under this rule seem neither preferred to non-resonant rhymes, nor thought inferior to them.

B. The Elizabethan poets, and our modern English Parnassians such as the late Mr. Rossetti, are very fond of a pretty kind of resonant rhyme in which one or each of the rhyming syllables has merely a secondary tonic accent, as in this quatrain from Shakespeare's Sonnets (lxvi.) :—

And art made tongue-tied by authori^{ty},
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplici^{ty},
And captive good attending captain ill :

C. Down to the seventeenth century, resonant rhymes

with the primary tonic accent on the rhyming syllables, are pretty common, but they tend to disappear, partly probably because the English ear developed a dislike to resonance, partly because the words themselves through alteration in accent often ceased to rhyme, or changed their manner of rhyming. This last is especially true of words of more than one syllable from the French, which generally begin their career in English with an accent on the last syllable, and afterwards throw it back.

Wisdom, largess, estate, and cunning *sûre*
In every point so guided her *measûre*.

KING JAMES I. OF SCOTLAND (1394-1437).

Both sleeping, waking, in rest, and in *travâil* :
Me to recomfort it does most *avâil*,

WILLIAM DUNBAR, (1460-1520) *The Merle and
the Nightingale*.

In the same poem *comfortable* rhymes with *delectable*, and
vale with *travâil*.

Then, if for my love thou my love receivest,
I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest ;
But yet be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest
By wilful taste of what thyself refusest.

SHAKESPEARE, *Sonnet xl*.

Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view
Want nothing that the thought of heart can *mend* ;
All tongues, the voice of souls, give thee that due,
Uttering bare truth, even so as foes commend.

Sonnet lxi.

D. The resonant rhyme most repugnant to modern English usage is between monosyllables, constituting a pun. Yet this is found in both Chaucer and Spenser.

The holy blissful martyr for to *seke*,
That hem hath holpen, when that they were *seke*.¹

CHAUCER, *Prologue to Canterbury Tales*.

Leapt fierce upon his shield, and her huge *train*
All suddenly about his body wound,
That hand or foot to stir he strove in vain :
God help the man so wrapt in *Errorr's* endless *train*.

SPENSER, *Faery Queen*, i. 18.

Such a punning resonance as this would indeed be hardly admitted in French, for there is scarcely any difference in sense between *train* at the end of the stanza and *train* in the middle.

However, resonant rhymes of Class C, and still more of Class D, are generally avoided in modern English poetry, though the present tendency is, perhaps, to rehabilitate them.

It must be observed that the tonic accent accompanying these rhymes makes them unpleasant to the ear, which is satisfied by the complete assonance and consonance forcibly carried to it by the accent. Resonance is thus cloying ; and this is more so in modern English, because the accent is stronger than formerly.

There are, moreover, comparatively few resonant rhymes that could be formed in modern English except those of Class D. For the tonic accent being generally thrown back, most of our modern single rhymes are monosyllabic words, and our double rhymes dissyllabic words, since the rhyme cannot fall on an unaccented syllable. But punning rhymes, even in French, such as *chaîne, chène* ; *pas* (a step), *pas* (not) ; *porte* (he carries), *porte* (a gate), are especially

¹ Sick.

appropriated to comic poetry, though freely admitted in a serious and even pathetic style. The mass of French resonant rhymes are not puns at all, because the rhyming syllable is not generally the first of the word ; thus *pupilles*, *Thermopyles*, quoted p. 35, form a resonant rhyme, but not a pun. The majority of non-punning resonant rhymes in French has thus helped to excuse the use of the punning minority. The punning majority of English resonances has helped to bring about the disuse of the few non-punning resonances as well.

In English there are also few etymological and grammatical terminations, and those few are mostly atonic. French, on the contrary, swarms with sonorous terminations, on which the rhyme must often fall. The *consonne d'appui* is, therefore, frequently the only part of the rhyme in which there is any vestige of the root or individual character of the word.

Compare speak, speakest, speaking, with *parler, parlez, parlons, parlions*, &c. In the resonant rhymes *mêler, mêlez, mêlons, mêlions*, the *l* is the only significant part. In any non-resonant rhyme with the English words (weak, seekest, reeking), we find both a strongly accented vowel sound and a *k*, that are individual. And, while the tonic accent strengthens the English rhyme, the general accentual structure of the verse relieves the rhyme from the burden of being *l'unique harmonie*. The French rhyme, naturally weaker, has to do double work. We find, accordingly, that in English verse, in proportion to the regularity and mechanical recurrence of the accentual feet, is the rejection of resonant rhyme. The versification of Pope,

For this plain reason ; *mán* is *nót* a *flý*.

with its rigid accentual iambs, rejects resonance more absolutely than the soft metre of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

So the versification of the classical French poets, with rigid pauses of sense at the *cæsura* (p. 84), and the end of the line, could and did dispense with resonance very much better than the modern Romantic poetry, because these pauses, to a certain extent, replace the tonic accent. Such a couplet as—

Rebelle à tous nos soins, || sourde à tous nos discours,
Voulez-vous sans pitié || laisser finir vos jours?

RACINE, *Phèdre*, i. 3.

needs resonance much less than the following lines :—

Le Gentilhomme. Comment, duc ! dans l'instant
Il était avec vous.

M. de Piemme. Le roi chasse !

Le Gentilhomme. Sans pages
Et sans piqueurs alors. Car tous ses équipages
Sont là.

M. de Piemme (aside). Diable !
(*aloud*) On vous dit (comprenez-vous ceci?)
Que le roi ne peut voir personne !

Triboulet. Elle est ici !

V. HUGO, *Le Roi s'Amuse*, iii. 3.

We may now turn to consider the extent to which resonance is required in French verse, and we shall find that this differs both in respect of the period, the individual poet, the style of poetry, and the particular assonance and consonance in question.

I. In that kind of early rhymed poetry, which is nearest in structure to the assonant metre of the *Chanson de Roland*, that is, composed of long strains upon one rhyme, it was

obviously impossible to pay any attention to resonance, on account of the number of rhymes required with the same assonance and consonance.

But, as soon as poetry came to be written in couplets and cross rhymes, where a preference for resonance could be indulged, there is an evident choice, where possible, of such rhymes. Down to the end of the sixteenth century, this preference becomes more and more exclusive, and the sixteenth century itself, with its large vocabulary, and its common use of short lyrical metres free from *cæsura*, carried resonance further than any period but the present.

Clément Marot, whose life corresponds with the first half of the sixteenth century, perhaps represents the culminating point of this tendency.

But Malherbe (1555-1628) began a revolution which, in the end, was hostile to resonant rhyme, though Malherbe himself rhymed richly. This revolution, accomplished by Boileau (1636-1711), made the Alexandrine couplet the typical form of French verse, and imposed on the Alexandrine itself a rigid pause in the sense at the *cæsura*, and at the end of the first line of the couplet, and a more complete break in the sense after each couplet. This structure could, as we have said, dispense with resonance better than a freer one, and the necessity of the pauses at the end of the lines imposed such a limitation on the poet's choice of rhyme, that resonance could only be exacted in the commonest terminations. Side by side with this change in structure, went on, from Malherbe to the French Revolution, a perpetual diminution of the literary and especially the poetical vocabulary, so that the classical poetry of the

seventeenth, and still more of the eighteenth century and the First Empire, was reduced to a scanty list of frequently recurring rhymes. Even in Racine (1639-1699) this recurrence is painfully evident.

However, it is misleading to say simply of this classical versification, that it only uses resonant rhymes accidentally. Corneille, Boileau, Racine, and Voltaire are very conscientious in their rhyming. A desinence, such as *acute e*, which they regard as absolutely insufficient without support, they invariably provide with support; such desinences as masculine terminations in *i*, or a nasal, they almost always support; but it was quite impossible, with their small vocabulary and metrical system, to provide any but accidental resonances in *ince*, or *ombre*, or *âtre*. They would reject the weak rhymes in *é* and *i* which may be found in Alfred de Musset's *Souvenir*, but they would never rhyme so richly as Alfred de Musset does in his *Réponse à Charles Nodier*.

André Chénier (died 1794) was the first to open the way to the return to the versification of the sixteenth century. The revolution has been completed by Victor Hugo (born 1802), and resonant rhyme is more and more rigorously required of the nineteenth century poet. Of course an essential condition of this reaction has been the abandonment of the severe versification of Boileau, and the admission of all the words in the dictionary into the poet's service.

II. Of the individual French poets before Malherbe, it may be said generally, that in every generation the best poets rhyme the most richly. But this is not so true of the seventeenth century, for La Fontaine, one of its greatest poets, indulges more freely than anyone before or since in

the use of every kind of non-resonant rhyme. And again, in the nineteenth century, Alfred de Musset often seems to be happiest when he rhymes worst, as in the *Souvenir*. Some poets make up for some deficiency in resonance by the frequent use of alliteration, and by ingenuity of metre. Still, as a rule, the more richly a modern poet rhymes, the better he is, or, at least, the better he is considered. The obligation to rhyme richly is especially stringent in poems depending on their form, such as sonnets, and is not so binding in the case of tales in verse, or comic pieces, which approach nearer to prose.

III. In considering the degree in which different assonances and consónances can dispense with resonance, some weight must be attributed to the fulness or thinness of the sound, some to the rarity or commonness, the characteristic or merely grammatical character of the termination.

Assonances in *acute e*, whether masculine or feminine, are those which most urgently need the support of resonance. *Acute e* is in itself the thinnest of the sonorous vowels, and it is incapable of any sonorous consonance, for in such words as *piège, collège, &c.*, the acute accent does not really represent an *acute e*, but a kind of *open e*, and they are now often written *piège, collègue, &c.* It is, moreover, almost always a mere verbal desinence, representing a participle, infinitive, or second personal plural, and as such is exceedingly common. Rhymes in *acute e*, masculine or feminine, without support, are consequently found only in rustic verse, or in such very free writers as La Fontaine or Alfred de Musset. The strict classical poets avoid them as much as the severest modern masters of rhyme, though it may perhaps be alleged against

the contemporaries and followers of Boileau, that they use too many rhymes in *acute e*, which even with the *consonne d'appui* ought to be employed sparingly. Thus the following three couplets from Racine are very monotonous, in spite of each having the *consonne d'appui* :—

Un enfant dans les fers ; et je ne puis songer
Que Troie en cet état aspire à se venger.
Ah ! si du fils d'Hector la perte était jurée,
Pourquoi d'un an entier l'avons-nous différée ?
Dans le sein de Priam n'a-t-on pu l'immoler ?
Sous tant de morts, sous Troie, il fallait l'accabler.

Andromaque, i. 2.

Since an iotized vowel can never form a resonant rhyme with its simple, iotized *acute e* rhymes very badly with simple *acute e*. However, two terminations in iotized *acute e* can rhyme without the *consonne d'appui*, at least in the versification of the seventeenth century :—

Pyrrhus. Viens voir tous ses attraits, Phénix, humiliés
Allons.

Phénix. Allez, seigneur, vous jeter à ses pieds.

Andromaque, ii. 5.

And this kind of rhyme is very common in La Fontaine and Alfred de Musset.

La Fontaine generally observes the rule of using resonant rhymes in *acute e*, but occasionally neglects it :—

Et je sais que de moi tu médis l'an passé.
Comment l'aurais-je fait, si je n'étais pas né ?

Fables, i. 10.

Ne faut-il que délibérer ?
La cour en conseillers foisonne,
Est-il besoin d'exécuter ?
On ne retrouve plus personne.

Fables, ii. 2.

Alfred de Musset generally shows some respect for resonance in his rhymes in *acute e*. Thus he does not rhyme such desinences when the words have quite different *consonnes d'appui*, but only when one of them has a vowel and the other a consonant preceding the rhyme, or when both have a vowel, though not the same one, which is an approach to resonance :—

Gunther. Je ne te verrai plus, mon Frank ! On t'a tué !

Frank. Ce pauvre vieux Gunther, je l'avais oublié

La Coupe et les Lèvres, iv. 1.

or when there is a hard consonant before one termination and a soft one of the same class before the other :—

Et c'est à ta Françoise, à ton ange de gloire,
Que tu pouvais donner ces mots à prononcer,
Elle qui s'interrompt, pour conter son histoire,
D'un éternel baiser.

Souvenir.

In *Mardoche* he refers to the question of rhymes in *ée*—

Les Muses visitaient sa demeure cachée
Et quoiqu'il fût rimer *idée* avec *fâchée*,
On le lisait.

He had used this rhyme in *Les Marrons du Feu*. The only excuse for it is, that *idée* is not a participle, like most words with the desinence *ée*.

A very rare desinence, such as *aé*, excuses a rhyme with another word, where the *é* is supported by a different vowel :—

Depuis que sur ces bords les dieux ont envoyé
La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé.

RACINE, *Phèdre*, i. 1.

The vowel *i* alone needs support almost as much as *acute e*; such rhymes as *blanchi*, *chéri*, are very bad, combining the

faults of a thin assonance and a very common and purely grammatical termination. They are hardly to be found in any good poets after Malherbe, except La Fontaine and Alfred de Musset :—

Elle vous cherchera : son sexe en use ainsi.

Certain couple d'amis, en un bourg établi,

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, vii. 12.

J'ai vu ma seule amie, à jamais la plus chère,

Devenue elle-même un sépuchre blanchi,

Une tombe vivante où flottait la poussière

De notre mort chéri.

A. DE MUSSET, *Souvenir*.

But in the feminine form *ie*, or with even a mute consonance, rhymes with this assonance are admitted by the versification of the classical school without support, though the resonant rhyme is preferred :—

Quoi ! votre amour se veut charger d'une furie

Qui vous détestera, qui toute votre vie—

RACINE, *Andromaque*, iii. 1.

Le pauvre homme ! Allons vite en dresser un écrit :

Et que puisse l'envie en crever de dépit.

MOLIÈRE, *Tartuffe*, iii. 7.

Rhymes in *a* alone require support, except in the freest versification :—

Nenni.—M'y voici donc ?—Point du tout.—M'y voilà ?—

Vous n'en approchez point.—La chétive pécore

S'enfla si bien qu'elle creva.

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, i. 3.

However, with even a mute consonance, such rhymes are admissible in modern verse :—

Quant à flatter la foule, ô mon esprit, non pas !

Ah ! le peuple est en haut, mais la foule est en bas.

V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*. Prologue.

It may be observed, however, that in this last rhyme the *consonnes d'appui* *p* and *b* are similar, though not the same ; and also that monosyllabic words, when put at the rhyme, dispense more readily with support than others ; for if they have support, they will generally make puns, and these, though good, are not favourite rhymes in serious poetry.

Rhymes in *ant* without support are bad. Here we can cite the authority of La Fontaine against himself :—

Au doux zephyr, et le priant
De les porter à son *amant*—
“ Je vous arrête à cette rime ”
Dira mon censeur à l'*instant*,
“ Je ne la tiens pour légitime,
Ni d'une assez grande vertu.”

Fables, ii. 1.

Non-resonant rhymes in assonances other than *acute e*, *i*, *a*, *ant*, are admissible ; but the extent to which they are so varies with the fulness of the vowel sound, the sonorousness of the consonance, and the rarity and individuality of the termination. Poets of any strictness in rhyming are very reluctant to admit any non-resonant masculine rhymes, and exclude even non-resonant feminine rhymes, except where the sequel is very sonorous, as *ombre*, *ôtre*, *astre*.

Rhymes extending back over more than one syllable are called *doubles* or *surabondantes*. The latter term is depreciatory, yet if the abundance is not due to a mere grammatical or etymological desinence, it is a beauty, provided the sense is not sacrificed to it. They are common in Marot in the seventeenth, and Baudelaire in the nineteenth century.

The following passage, taken at random from Victor Hugo,

represents the average resonance of the best nineteenth century poetry. It is not, however, so free of non-resonant rhymes as the poems of the Parnassians, nor has it any very ingenious *rimes surabondantes* like this from Baudelaire—*tamariniers, mariniers*.

De tout ceci, du gouffre obscur, du fatal *sort*,
Des haines, des fureurs, des tombes, ce qui *sort*,
C'est de la clarté, peuple, et de la certitude.
Progrès ! Fraternité ! Foi ! Que la *solitude*
L'affirme, et que la foule y consente à grands *cris* ;
Que le hameau joyeux le dise au grand *Paris*,
Et que le Louvre ému le dise à la *chaumière* !
La dernière heure est claire, autant que la *première*
Fut sombre ; et l'on entend distinctement au *fond*
Du ciel noir la rumeur que les naissances *font*.
On distingue en cette ombre un bruissement *d'ailes*
Et moi, dans ces feuillets farouches et *fidèles*,
Dans ces pages de deuil, de bataille et d'*effroi*,
Si la clameur d'angoisse éclata malgré *moi*,
Si j'ai laissé tomber le mot de la *souffrance*,
Une négation quelconque d'*espérance*,
J'efface ce sanglot obscur qui se *perdit* ;
Ce mot, je le rature et je ne l'ai pas *dit*.

L'Année Terrible. Juillet.

Here, in nine couplets, there is but one with a non-resonant rhyme—*effroi, moi*.

If the reader will compare this with a passage from Racine, exhibiting the average resonance of seventeenth century Alexandrine couplets, he will see the extent of the change, and if he will compare the rest of the versification, and the diction and vocabulary of the two, he will feel that this change is not an arbitrary one, but intimately connected with others.

Oui, ma juste fureur, et j'en fais vanité,
 A vengé mes parents sur ma postérité.
 J'aurais vu massacrer et mon père et mon frère,
 Du haut de son palais precipiter ma mère,
 Et dans un même jour égorger à la fois
 (Quel spectacle d'horreur !) quatre-vingts fils de rois ;
 Et pourquoi ? pour venger je ne sais quels prophètes
 Dont elle avait puni les fureurs indiscrettes :
 Et moi, reine sans cœur, fille sans amitié,
 Esclave d'une lâche et frivole pitié,
 Je n'aurais pas du moins à cette aveugle rage
 Rendu meurtre pour meurtre, outrage pour outrage,
 Et de votre David traité tous les neveux¹
 Comme on traitait d'Achab les restes malheureux !
 Où serais-je aujourd'hui, si, domptant ma faiblesse,
 Je n'eusse d'une mère étouffé la tendresse ;
 Si de mon propre sang ma main versant des flots
 N'eût de ce coup hardi réprimé vos complots ?

Athalie, ii. 7.

Here, in nine couplets, there are only four resonant rhymes.

Observe (1) that *liaison* can make a good resonance. Thus *on a* rhymes with *donna*, *vingt ans* with *temps*.

(2) A supporting vowel *should* be the same in both words, as in *haïr*, *trahir*. But *haïr*, *obéir*, is a much better rhyme than *haïr*, *soupir*, and the last a little better than *soupir*, *désir*, where there are quite different consonants.

(3) The ear, and not the eye, is the judge of resonance. Therefore, rhymes such as *signé*, *né*, are very bad, in spite of authority to the contrary; and so are *brillée*, *allée*, although the spelling is the same.

On the other hand, *ll*, with the *mouillé* sound, and *y*, con-

¹ As in old English, *descendants*, not our modern *nephews*. From Latin *nepotes*.

stitute a resonance, and the following rhyme from Baudelaire is really double in spite of the spelling—*appareillons*, *rayons*. For, according to ordinary pronunciation, these words are *apparé-yons*, *ré-yons*, though M. Littré rejected as a vulgarism this manner of speaking.

(4) A double rhyme in French is not the least like a double rhyme in English. As we have said before, the nearest approach to an English double rhyme, as *hâted*, *fâted*, is a feminine rhyme as sung. Anything like a French double rhyme would be now excluded from English verse on account of its richness. *Cre-a-tûre* and *natûre* in the fifteenth century make a rhyme somewhat like a French double rhyme.

Ah ! sweet, are ye a worldly *cre-a-tûre*,
Or heavenly thing in likeness of *na-tûre*?

JAMES I. OF SCOTLAND.

CHAPTER VIII.

FURTHER REMARKS ON RHYME.

SINCE the rhyme is all-important in French, certain precepts, not of strict necessity, but of perfection, are laid down with regard to it by M. de Banville, which are by no means without application to English verse, and depend on this principle, that the *rhyme is intended to excite and not to lull to sleep the ear and attention of the reader.*

1. Rhymes should be, as far as possible, between different parts of speech. *Vie* (life) rhymes better with *envie*, { I envy,
he envies, } than with the substantive *envie*, and so on.

2. This is especially the case with words of a subordinate kind. If an adjective or participle is put at the rhyme at all, there should, if possible, be a different part of speech in the other verse. The difficulty of carrying this out with terminations in *é* and *ée* is one of the objections to that sort of rhyme.

3. Adverbs rhyme very badly together, even when they are of a different sort, as *ainsi*, *aussi*, compared with *ici*. But when the rhyme is formed by the termination *ment*, which can be attached to almost any adjective, the facility of the jingle increases its poorness. Such words as *doucement*, *follement*, &c., ought only to rhyme with words like

serment, aimant, amant, Allemand, &c. However, in poems like *Ballades*, where there are great many lines on *one* rhyme, there is no objection to two or three adverbs separated by a number of lines with the same rhyme formed by other parts of speech.

4. Rhymes between words of a similar meaning, as *malheurs, pleurs*, of a contrary meaning as *bonheur, malheur*, or that have been already used to death, as *jour, amour*, all sin against the general principle, for the practised reader is on his guard against them. It is rather odd that the French should be as unlucky in their *amour* as we are in our *love*. *Amour*, derived from *amorem*, like hosts of words in *-eur* from *-orem* formerly also written *-our*, has unfortunately with the settled orthography in *-our*, become incapable of rhyming with its kindred, *rimeur, humeur, clameur, &c.* In the same way *love* has in modern English lost almost all its rhyming power. The French poets must envy their Spanish and Italian brethren, whose rhymes in *-or* and *-ore* to *amor, amore*, can be counted by dozens.

5. Conjunctions like *et, puisque, &c.*, must *never* be put at the rhyme. This is a peremptory rule, not a counsel of perfection.

6. Rhymes between a simple word and its compound or derivative, *faire, refaire*, or between two compounds and derivatives of the same word, *bienfaiteur, malfaiteur*, or between the same word in two senses, derived one from the other, as *ingrat* (ungrateful) and *ingrat* (barren), or used as two different parts of speech, *demeure* (verb) and *demeure* (noun), are theoretically forbidden. But the French show themselves in practice much more lenient here than we

should expect, especially in the times before Malherbe, and in cases where there is a sufficient difference of sense to veil the etymological identity of the words. In comparing the two languages, we must take into account, here as everywhere, the influence of the tonic accent, which informs the most illiterate Englishman of the connection between *doubt* and *redoubtable*. To Racine, on the contrary, the connection between *doutez* and *redoutés* (see p. 39) is merely a matter of knowledge, not of instinct. A great deal, also, is due to the fact that the roots of French are in a dead language, and something to the love of resonance. Thus *pas* (a step) and *pas* (not), though etymologically the same word, form a very common rhyme; and before Malherbe, *demeure* (substantive) is a good rhyme with *demeure* (verb).

It may be said of most of these precepts, that the poetry of the early period of a literature, and of young poets, deserves especial indulgence, because technical weakness is counterbalanced by freshness and vigour. Plays upon words, which would shock one in Tennyson or Hugo, do not displease in Shakespeare or Rotrou. Thus in *Antigone*, the heroine, when Créon asks her if she has not been *surprised* burying Polynice, answers,

Non, on m'a *prise*, Sire, on ne m'a pas *surprise*,
On ne saurait *surprendre* en si juste *entreprise*.

ROTROU, *Antigone*, iv. 3.

The modern reader is perhaps pleased by this sort of artless artifice, but he would not put up with it from a contemporary poet.

Alfred de Musset is the best instance of the subordination

of all rules to the youth and genius of an individual. But this kind of prerogative has its drawbacks, for a poet cannot always rely on his youth ; and accordingly it will be found that poets who mean to be read when they are fifty or even eighty, and accomplish this intention, have generally begun by a conscientious conformance with rule.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TO COUNT THE SYLLABLES IN THE BODY OF THE VERSE.

IT has been said already that French versification is essentially syllabic, and that the number of metrical syllables in every line must be precisely ascertainable.

We have also seen that the rhyming termination, being *l'unique harmonie du vers*, is isolated from the next verse to give it force and relief. An exactly contrary principle governs the body of the verse, which is, as it were, the handle or vehicle to direct or carry the rhyme. It is necessary that this should form a smooth and homogeneous whole, as if it were one word, and the rules as to the counting and pronunciation of metrical syllables all flow from this one source.

I. Every *e* mute standing unsupported by a consonant, and not forming the *last* syllable of the word, is suppressed altogether, and does not count as a syllable. This suppression is often represented in print by omitting the *e*, and putting the circumflex accent on the preceding vowel. Thus *flamboient*, *avouerais*, count as three syllables each, *flamboï-ment*, *a-voû-rai*; *louerais*, *nierons*, as two syllables each, *loû-rai*, *nî-rons*.

Qu'un grand brasier joyeux cuit à son *flam-boie-ment*.

V. HUGO, *Légende des Siècles*. Ratbert.

Jamais mon cœur ne t'ou-blie-ra,
Jamais la mort ne dé-lie-ra

RONSARD.

And this suppression may take place even at the end of the first word of a compound, as in the phrase *à tue-tête*.

Nous chantons à tue-tête ; il faut bien que la terre.

A. DE MUSSET, *Après une Lecture*.

Scan *à-tu-tê-tîl*.

However, till the seventeenth century, these *e* *mutés* could also be pronounced as separate syllables. In this line from Molière's *Don Garcie*, v. 6, both pronunciations are found :—

Mais je vous *a-voue-rai* que cette *gai-e-té*.

II. A final *e* *mute*, not followed by an *s* or *nt*, and thus belonging to Class I. or Class II. of feminine terminations (p. 20), as in the words *Ismène*, *être*, *esclave*, *quelle*, *aventure*, *Aricie*, *Thésée*, is elided before an initial vowel or *h* *mute*.

Ismène. *Aricie*, à la fin, de son sort est maîtresse,
Et bientôt à ses pieds verra tout la Grèce.

Aricie. Ce n'est donc point, *Ismène*, un bruit mal affermi ?
Je cesse d'être *esclave*, et n'ai plus d'ennemi ?

Ismène. Non, madame, les dieux ne vous sont plus contraires,
Et *Thésée* a rejoint les mânes de vos frères.

Aricie. Dit-on *quelle aventure* a terminé ses jours ?

RACINE, *Phèdre*, ii. 1.

Est-ce là, dira-t-il, cette *fière Hermione* ?

RACINE, *Andromaque*, ii. 1.

Scan and pronounce *A-ri-ci-a*, *Is-mè-nun*, *dê-tres-cla-vè*, *Thé-sé-a*, *quel-la-ven-tu-ra*, *fiè-rer-mi-on*'.

But the elision of the *e* *mute* of the pronoun *le* after an imperative, as in the following lines of Marot, La Fontaine, and Racine :—

Prenez-le, il a mangé le lard.

MAROT, *Ballade*.

Mettons-le en notre gibecière.

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, v. 3.

Condamnez-le à l'amende, ou s'il le casse, au fouet.

RACINE, *Les Plaideurs*, ii. 13.

is very harsh, and would not be admitted either in serious or in modern poetry ; for this *e* is generally pronounced as a separate syllable in ordinary speech. For the same reason it may be observed that it cannot form the supplementary mute syllable of a feminine rhyme, such as *battons-le*, *mettons-le*, or *mets-le*, *mêle*, although there are instances of this in Marot. The pronoun *la* cannot be elided after an imperative, but it differs from *le* in that it can form a masculine rhyme, though rather a poor one ; *prenez-la* will rhyme, e.g., with *il a*.

III. *E* mute supported by a consonant, and occurring either (a) in the middle of a word, as *serai*, *ornement* ; or (b) in the last syllable of a word ending in *s* or the *nt* of the third person plural, that is, in a termination of Class III. or Class V. (p. 20), as *êtes*, *tendent* ; or (c) as the last letter of a word (Class I.) followed by an initial consonant or *h* *aspirate*, counts as a syllable in the body of a verse.

Vous êtes bien payé de toutes vos caresses.

MOLIERE, *Tartuffe*, iii. 5.

Scan—

Vou-zê-te-bien-pé-ié-de-tou-te-vo-ca-ress'.

Quelle honte pour moi, quel triomphe pour lui,

RACINE, *Andromaque*, ii. 1.

Scan—

Quel-le-on-te-pour-moi-quel-tri-om-phe-pour-lui,

Nos Pylades là-bas tendent leur bras vers nous.

BAUDELAIRE, *La Mort*.

Scan—

No-Py-la-de-là-ba-ten-de-leur-bra-ver-nou.

Que ces vains ornements, que ces voiles me pèsent !

RACINE, *Phèdre*, i. 3.

Scan—

Que-cè-vain-zor-ne-ment-que-cè-voi-le-me-pès' !

The word *onze* and its derivatives are treated as if they began with an *h aspirate*. *Oui* has the privilege of being treated either as beginning with a vowel or consonant.

In the following line from Racine's *Plaideurs*, i. 7, the final *e* of *madame* is elided before *oui* :—

Chicaneau. Avez-vous dit, madame ?

Comtesse.

Oui.

Chicaneau.

J'irais sans façon

whereas in this line from the *Prologue* to V. Hugo's *Année Terrible*, the word *haute* counts as two syllables, *hau-te*, before *oui*.

Entendra ce tombeau dire à voix haute, Oui.

Scan—

En-ten-dra-ce-tom-beau-di-ra-voi-au-te-oui.

It must be observed that a mute syllable cannot bear the stress of the *cæsura* (p. 84) in those verses which have one. Thus Racine could not have written the verse quoted last from *Andromaque* :—

Pour moi quelle honte, quel triomphe pour lui

because the sixth syllable of an Alexandrine has to bear the *cæsura*.

Nor could Voltaire have written the line :—

Jamais n'eurent d'autre objet que moi-même,

instead of—

N'eurent jamais d'autre objet que moi-même,
because, in the metre he is writing in, there is a cæsura at the fourth syllable, which the mute termination of the word, *eurent*, cannot bear.

But this point was not always observed before Malherbe, especially in ten-syllabled verse. Thus in one of Villon's *Ballades* we find :—

Blanche tendre || polie et atteintée

and in a translation by O. de St. Gelais from Ovid's *Epistles* there are several such lines :—

Pénélope || cette lettre t'envoie

* * * *

ⁿ Taût haïe || des pucelles de Grèce.

This last line would also transgress Rule V., presently to be stated.

And in the beginning of the seventeenth century, Rotrou lets the cæsura of an Alexandrine rest on the pronoun *le* after an imperative :—

Allez, assurez-le || que sur ce peu d'appas

There seems no great objection to this last arrangement, as this particular mute syllable is much more substantial than any other. However, it has not found the sanction of modern usage.

IV. The pronunciation of these mute syllables, which count in the body of a verse, is a matter of some difficulty, in which French practice is by no means uniform.

A. In singing they are always pronounced fully as *eu*, and may even be sung to longer notes than adjacent sonorous vowels if the tune requires it. The song on p. 22, from Théophile Gautier, is sung :—

Di-teu-la-jeu-neu-bel-leŭ
 Ou-vou-lé-vou-zal-ler
 La-voi-lou-vreu-son-nai-leŭ
 La-bri-zeu-va-souf-fler.

B. In reading and reciting, there is a growing tendency not to give these syllables any pronunciation *as* syllables, except that which they would have in prose, but merely to indicate their existence to the ear by a slight pause on the previous syllable. According to this system, in the line quoted above :—

Quelle honte pour moi, quel triomphe pour lui !

the second syllable of *quelle* would be very faintly pronounced, because such is the best usage in conversation before an initial *h aspirate* ; but the second syllable of *honte* and the third of *triomphe* would not be pronounced, but only suggested by a pause on the first syllable of *honte*, and the second of *triomphe*.

C. But the traditional pronunciation of the *Théâtre Français* allows to all mute syllables which count in the body of a line, a distinct though rapid pronunciation, like that of a very short *eu*.

Quel-leŭ-on-teŭ pour-moi-quel-tri-om-pheŭ-pour-lui.

However, this system is by no means so strictly observed as formerly. In the present decade one cannot but notice at the *Français*, that a great many *e* *mutes* are swallowed or strangled (*mangés, étranglés*) which would have been sounded ten years ago. Every now and then there is a complaint in a review against the innovation, but it goes steadily on, and the actual pronunciation of the stage and the platform may be said to be a compromise between the extremes B and C.

The line is drawn differently by different people; but the following are the circumstances favourable to the syllabic pronunciation: (a) The support of several accumulated consonants, as in such words as *désastre*, *accablent*, *prêtre*, *temple*, *tremble*, *schisme*. (b) The presence in the same verse of a number of mute syllables which count, when they do not touch one another, but fall alternately, as in the line quoted from *Britannicus* (p. 20):—

Moi, fille, femme, sœur, et mère de vos maîtres.

This fine line, the nearest approach to an accented iambic verse which is possible in French, is quite spoilt when pronounced according to system B. Verses which unite a number of *consecutive* mute syllables, forming such amalgams as *je te le*, &c., are ugly, and can only be pronounced by the suppression of the alternate mute syllables, *jeu' leu* or *j'teul'*, as in prose. (c) A position between two consonants either the same or of the same class, as in the phrases *grâces à*, *arrête-toi*. Here the hard and soft sibilant, and the two *t*'s, can only be distinguished by a syllabic pronunciation of the intervening *mute e*. (d) A passionate and rhetorical passage. Even in conversation the French, under excitement, often give full syllabic pronunciation to what are ordinarily quite mute syllables. (e) Public acting and recitation. A Frenchman would regard as pedantic a syllabic pronunciation in a casual quotation or a friend's reading at home, which he would expect in a public performance.

The final *s* and *t* of mute terminations of Classes III. and V. are in any case pronounced in *liaison* before a vowel or *h* mute.

Grâces au ciel, mes mains ne sont point criminelles.

RACINE, *Phèdre*, i. 3.

Pronounce *Grâ-ceŭ-zau*.

Ils rêvent, étendus sans mouvement, sans voix.

SULLY-PRUDHOMME, *Sonnet*.

Scan *Ils-rê-ve-té-ten-du*, whatever pronunciation you give to the mute vowel of the third syllable.

V. A final mute syllable unsupported by a consonant cannot count as a syllable, nor can it be elided except when the *e* mute stands immediately before an initial vowel or *h* mute. Consequently all words with a termination of Class II., such as *Thésée*, *Aricie*, *voie*, *monnaie*, are only admitted into the body of a verse before an initial vowel or *h* mute, as in the examples given above, p. 66. And words with a termination of Class IV., or Class VI., as *voies*, *monnaies*, *louent*, *sourient*, are not admitted, except at the end of a feminine line.

But this is a modern rule. Before Malherbe and Boileau had fixed the system of versification, such a mute syllable could either be suppressed or counted.

La pluie nous a débués et lavés.

VILLON, *Ballade*.

Belleau, l'amour te poind, je te *prie*, ne l'oublie.

RONCARD.

Here suppress the *mute e* of *pluie*, *prie*.

Pies, corbeaux, nous ont les yeux cavés.

VILLON, *Ballade*.

Tydée, de tes jours j'ai la course bornée.

ROTRON, *Antigone*, i. 6.

Here scan *Pi-e*, *Ty-dé-e*.

Baudelaire approaches this ancient liberty in the following line from *L'Imprévu*, where, however, the spelling with *y* (authorized by the Academy in the feminine terminations of the verb *payer* only among verbs in *-yer*) to a certain extent justifies the treatment of *paye* as a dissyllable:—

Il faut que le gibier *paye* le vieux chasseur,

VI. However, since the Middle Ages the termination *aient* of the imperfect and conditional tenses, and the words *aient*, *soient*, are monosyllabic, and admitted freely into the body of the verse, though the masculine rhymes they form at the end of a line are not very good:—

Et soient vos bons avis suivis de bons effets.

ROTRON, *Antigone*, i. 5.

Scan *è-soi-vo*.

Les saints autels *n'étaient* à mes regards
Qu'un marchepié du trône des Césars.
L'ambition, la fureur, les délices,
Étaient mes dieux, *avaient* mes sacrifices.

VOLTAIRE.

Scan *nè-tai-ta, é-tai-mè-dieu-za-vai-mè-sa-cri-fié*.

But in early times these terminations were dissyllabic, and admitted on that footing into the body of the verse; since Rule V. is modern. Thus, in the *Chanson de Roland*, iv. 163:—

Disaient lui, Sire, rendez-le nous.

Scan—

Di-sai-e-lui-Si-re-ren-dé-le-nou.

Si qu'ils aient bonnes nouvelles.

G. DE LORRIS.

Scan *ai-e*.

Terminations in *oient*, which do not come under this rule, occupy a rather uncertain place in French prosody. Such word as *croient*, *voient*, *envoient*, &c., feel the influence of two analogies. Sometimes they are treated like the words *aient*, *soient*, as in the *Marseillaise* :—

Voient ton triomphe et notre gloire,

where *voient* is scanned like *voit*.

Sometimes they are used as feminine rhymes of Class VI. :—

Ne t'étonne donc plus, si je veux qu'ils se *voient* :
Je veux qu'en se voyant leurs fureurs se *déploient* ;
RACINE, *Les Frères Ennemis*, iii. 6.

However, this anomalous situation has caused such words to be generally avoided in modern verse.

VII. An initial vowel or *h* mute, except in the first word of the verse, must be preceded by a consonantal sound capable of being pronounced in *liaison* with it. A breach of this rule is called *hiatus*, and happens when the initial vowel or *h* mute is preceded by a sonorous vowel, as in this line of Ronsard :—

Feu|et dards

or by a consonant that cannot be pronounced in *liaison*, as in the word *et* :—

Et jamais qu'à genoux et|aux pieds des autels.
ROTROU, *Laure Persécutée*, i. 1.

or by an *n* which is *only* the sign of a nasal vowel, and incapable of being pronounced as a consonant :—

Ainsi soit-il toujours en ton sein|endormi.

RONSARD.

These examples, which might be multiplied indefinitely,

show that the rule against hiatus enforced by Malherbe and Boileau is an innovation contrary to the ancient usage of the language.

However, there is no doubt that a hiatus after a hard vowel such as *a, é, è*, is disagreeable. We may observe in our own language a certain aversion to hiatus evinced in the vulgarism of *I saw-rim, Maria-rand I*, for *I saw him, Maria and I*. And in French there seems to have been a growing dislike to hiatus after a hard vowel even in the body of a word, for the dissyllables *ma-ur, pa-on, A-ôût*, have shrunk either altogether, or in ordinary conversation into the monosyllabic sounds *mûr, pan, ôût*. But it does appear most incomprehensible that in a language delighting in hypsilonized and iotized vowels, phrases like *tu es, il y a, si elle*, should be rigorously excluded from verses, though their perfect euphony is proved by their indiscriminate use by poets till Malherbe, by their constant recurrence in prose and conversation, and by the free admission into modern verse of the *very same sounds* under the forms *tuais, il lia, partiel*.

Accordingly, a few examples of hiatus after *i, y, o, u, ou*, are to be found in poets contemporary with or subsequent to Boileau :—

O vent donc, puisque vent y | a,

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, ix. 7.

Tant y | a qu'il n'est rien que votre chien ne prenne ;

RACINE, *Les Plaideurs*, iii. 3.

Ah ! folle que tu | es !

A. DE MUSSET, *Namouna*.

The rule against hiatus, being partly conventional, is not

so strictly observed when there is an *apparent* consonant at the end of the first word :—

3 Souffrey/ que la raison | enfin vous persuade.
Les Plaideurs, i. 4.

or in the case of interjections, or when the second word is *oui* :—

Oh là ! | Oh ! descendez, que l'on ne vous le dise,
LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, iii. 1.

Chicaneau. On la conseille:

Petit-Jean.

Oh ! |

Comtesse.

Oui, de me faire lier.

Les Plaideurs, i. 8.

VIII. Till the fourteenth century the elision of the vowels *a*, *i*, *o*, *u*, before an initial vowel or *h* mute was not contrary to the genius of the French language. In the *Chanson de Roland* such elisions are frequent, and they were not confined to verse. In modern literary French the only remains of this elision are to be found in the case of the article *la*, the pronoun *la* except after an imperative, phrases like *ma mie* for *ma amie*, and the conjunction *si* before *il* or *ils*. However, some vestiges of this kind of elision, now lost, are to be found in Ronsard :—

S'elle veut me baiser, ne se fera point mal

for *Si elle*.

The loss of the privilege of eliding sonorous vowels, and the rule against hiatus, constitute a great difficulty in French versification. A French poet cannot use the words *tu* and *toi* with anything like the freedom that an English poet has with *thou* and *thee* ; *tu as*, *tu aimes*, *tu es*, are all forbidden. This is

one reason which inclines the French to use the plural *vous* much more than the singular in their verse.

IX. In general every possible *liaison* in the body of a verse is fully given in pronunciation, however unusual in prose.

Régner et de l'état embrasser la conduite ?

RACINE, *Phèdre*, iii. 1.

is recited *Ré-gné-ré-de-lé-ta-tem-bra-sé-la-con-duit'*, although in prose the *liaison* after *régner* and *état* would be very forced. However, there is here also some difference between the usage in singing or acting, and that in domestic reading or reciting, when a very unusual *liaison* may sound harsh and pedantic.

We add the scansion of the first speech of Hermione in the fifth scene of the fourth act of Racine's *Andromaque*, as an example of the rules laid down in this chapter :—

Sei-gneur-dan-cet-ta-veu-dé-pou-yé-dar-ti-fic'
 Jai-ma-voir-que-du-moin-vou-vou-ren-diez-jus-tic'
 A Et-que-vou-lan-bien-rom-prun-noeu-si-so-lé~~n~~-nel
 Vou-vou-za-ban-don-né-zau-cri-men-cri-mi-nel
 É-til-jus-ta-prè-tou-qu'un-con-qué-ran-sa-baiss'
 Sou-la-ser-vi-le-loi-de-gar-dé-sa-pro-mess'
 Non-non-la-per-fi-di-a-de-quoi-vous-ten-té
 Et-vou-ne-me-cher-ché-que-pour-vou-zen-ven-té
 Quoi-san-que-ni-ser-men-ni-de-voir-vous-re-tien'
 Re-cher-ché-ru-ne-Grec-ca-man-du-ne-Troi-ien'
 Me-quit-té-me-re-pren-drè-re-tour-né-ren-cor
 De-la-fi-ye-dé-lè-na-la-veu-ve-dec-tor
 Cou-ron-né-tou-ra-tour-les-cla-vè-la-prin-cess'
 Im-mo-lé-Troi-au-Grec-zau-fis-dec-tor-la-Grèc'
 Tou-ce-la-par-dun-cœur-tou-jour-maî-tre-de-soi
 Dun-é-ro-qui-né-pa-les-cla-ve-de-sa-foi

and so on.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCANNING OF DIPHTHONGS.

A HARD vowel followed by another in the same word does not make a diphthong. Thus the letters *aou* in in the word *Août* do not make a diphthong, because either the word is pronounced *a-ou*, in which case there is an unpleasant collision but not the least mixing of the two syllables, or *où*, in which case the first vowel is simply omitted for the sake of euphony. No rule can be laid down why *aoriste* should be pronounced *o-ris-te*, and *fléau*, *flé-au*. And of course vowels written in two letters, as *ai*, *ou*, *eu*, are not diphthongs.

But the iotized and hypsilonized vowels are true diphthongs, because each part of them is separately heard, and yet the *i* or *u* sound melts into the following one. It would take a whole volume fully to discuss the history and pronunciation of these sounds, but some hints are necessary to enable the reader to scan French verses with any certainty.

1. It must not be supposed that in any particular word these sounds may be monosyllabic or dissyllabic at will. *Hier* may be pronounced ' *hi-er* or *hier*, *duel* as *du-el* or *duel*; but such liberty is very exceptional.

2. A diphthong which is dissyllabic in conversation will be dissyllabic in verse. But the converse is not always true, for there are many words like *scorpion*, *nation*, *diadème*,

which are in conversation *scor-pion*, *na-cion*, *dia-dè-me*, but in verse *scor-pi-on*, *na-ci-on*, *di-a-dè-me*. A few modern poets, such as A. de Musset and Baudelaire, sometimes import the prose pronunciation into verse, but this is not done by the best authorities, as Victor Hugo, who is very conscientious about his diphthongs.

3. Certain principles of etymology and euphony may be laid down concerning all diphthongs.

A. The combination of three sonorous syllables without intervening consonants is most repugnant to the ear. La Fontaine has the word *chi-a-oux*, from the Turkish, in his *Fables*, i. 12 :—

Le chi-a-oux, homme dé sens,

but this is quite an anomaly. It may be laid down as almost universally true, that an iotized sound must be monosyllabic if the dissyllabic pronunciation would cause three sonorous syllables to stand together without consonants. This rule applies to such words as *pa-ien*, *fa-ien-ce*, but, above all, wherever the letter *y* represents two *i*'s. In such cases there can be no doubt, not even when there is a double iotization ; *royaume*, *effrayant*, *payons*, *payions*, &c., must be scanned *roi-iau-me*, *ef-fré-iant*, *pé-ions*, *pé-ions*.

B. Wherever in a verb the first part of a diphthong belongs to the root, the second to the termination, then, subject to Rule A, the diphthong is dissyllabic. Thus from *ri-re*, we have *ri-ons*, from *lou-er* *lou-ons*, from *con-clu-re* *con-clu-ais*. But pronounce *bégayer* *bé-ghé-ier*, *bégayais* *bé-ghé-iais*, according to Rule A.

When the whole diphthong belongs to the termination, as in *ai-mions*, *ai-miez*, the first and second persons plural

of the imperfect indicative or present subjunctive of *aimer*, it is monosyllabic. In the Middle Ages such terminations were either monosyllabic or dissyllabic, according to the number of Latin syllables represented ; *aimions*, from *a-ma-bâmus*, was pronounced *ai-mi-ons*, from *a-mémus*, *ai-mions*. The diphthong *ions* in a verbal termination after *r*, preceded by a non-liquid consonant, is dissyllabic, as *vou-dri-ons*.

C. Subject to Rule B, iotized vowels are dissyllabic from the middle of the seventeenth century, when the *i* sound is preceded immediately by *r* or *l*, preceded by a non-liquid consonant. Thus scan *san-gli-er*, *bou-cli-er*, *meur-tri-er*, *pri-ère*, &c., but *vou-driez*, not *vou-dri-ez*, because of Rule B. Before the seventeenth century, and by Rotrou and La Fontaine, these words are scanned according to their etymology, *bou-clier* from *bucculârium*, *san-glier* from *singulârem*.

Vous étiez son *bou-clier* au milieu des alarmes.

ROTROU, *Antigone*, i. 4.

Mais beaux et bons *san-gliers*, daims et cerfs bons et beaux.

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, ii. 19.

This rule does not affect hypsilonized vowels at all ; thus we scan *con-strui-re*, *trois*, *Blois*.

D. Subject to Rule C, a diphthong is monosyllabic when it represents in a word of popular derivation the simple vowel of the accented syllable of the Latin original. Thus, from the Latin *fēbrem*, we have *fiè-vre*, from *cælum* *ciel*, from *rēm* *rien*, from *bēne* *bien*, from *mel* *miel*, from *fel* *fiel*, from *fērūm* *fier*, from *cānem* *chien*. Hence the diphthongs *oi* and *oin* are always monosyllabic, *régem* *roi*, *testimōnium* *té-moin*. This change of the Latin tonic vowel into a diph-

thong is peculiar to the Western Romance languages, and rare in Italian.

E. In modern words copied from the Latin, like *O-ri-ent* from *O-ri-en-tem*, a diphthong is generally dissyllabic, because the *i* or *u* sound is taken from a Latin syllable.

F. Words formed on the analogy of, or by inflection from, those which come under Rules D and E, will follow Rules D and E respectively. Thus *Egyptianus*, *gloriosus*, *gratiosus*, *officialis*, give, according to E, *É-gyp-ti-en*, *glo-ri-eux*, *gra-ci-eux*, *of-fi-ci-el*; hence the terminations *i-en*, *i-eux*, *i-euse*, *i-el*, *i-elle*, added to a root to make adjectives, are pronounced dissyllabically. But where such diphthongs are part of the root of the word, they will usually be monosyllabic, *cieux*, *vieux*, *viei-llard*, *niel-le*. So, subject to C, words formed in *ier*, *ière*, conform to the derivation from *-ârem*, *-ârium*, and the diphthong is monosyllabic, *guer-rier*, *pom-mier*. A monosyllabic diphthong, as in *dia-ble*, *Chrétien*, seems sometimes to represent two Latin syllables, *di-âb-o-lum*, *Chris-ti-â-num*, but the appearance is often misleading. In old words like these, the short unaccented *i* of the Latin is not retained. The *-ien* of *Chrétien* is not a modern dissyllabic suffix copied from the Latin *ianum*, as in *co-mé-di-en*, but a monosyllabic iotization of the termination *-ânum*. In *dia-ble* we can trace the process. *Di-â-bo-lum* became *dé-a-ble*, for the short atonic *i*, being in the first syllable of the word, was not at once discarded, but passed into *é*. To soften the hiatus of *dé-a-ble*, a euphonic *i* was inserted in the second syllable, *dé-ia-ble*. Afterwards the *é* was thrown out, and there remained *dia-ble*.

4. It is worth observing that, subject to these foregoing

rules, iotized *acute e* and *in* (written *ien*) are generally monosyllabic; iotized *open e* more often monosyllabic than not, except when written *i-ai*, which is usually dissyllabic. Iotized *a* and *o* are more often dissyllabic than not. Nasals, other than *in*, are generally dissyllabic when iotized. Thus *hiè-rar-chi-e*, *pied*, *pi-tié*, &c., *mien*, *viens*, *tiens*, &c. *Diè-gue*, *re-lief*, but *li-ais*, *ni-ais*. *Hier* and *biais* may be pronounced in either way. *Di-a-mant*, *mi-au-ler*, *na-ti-on*, *sci-en-ce*, according to the general rule; but *dia-ble*, *dia-cre*, *vian-de*, *pio-che*.

5. *Oi*, *oin*, *uin*, are always monosyllabic, and so is *ui*, except in *bru-i-ne*, *bru-i-re*, and their kindred, and in words copied from the Latin, as *ru-i-ne* from *ru-ina*. Other hypsilonized vowels are generally dissyllabic, even against Latin and English analogy: *per-su-a-der*, *jou-et*, *mu-et*, *su-a-ve*, &c. Among the commonest exceptions are *oui* and *fouet*. *Louis* is better *Lou-is*, but *Louis* is permissible. *Juan* is a monosyllable.

In *poète* and the allied words the diphthong *oè* is monosyllabic till Boileau, dissyllabic afterwards; they are now often written *poète*, *poème*.

Le *poè-te* autrefois n'en dut guère,

LA FONTAINE, *Fables*, ix. 6.

Un sonnet sans défauts vaut seul un long *po-eme*.

BOILEAU, *Art Poétique*, ii. 94.

On the other hand, Ronsard scans *mo-el-le*, and A. de Musset *moel-leux*. In *poè-le* this diphthong has only one syllable. *Duel* is sometimes monosyllabic, but the other pronunciation is more common.

6. But the surest way of knowing the quantity of diph-

thongs is to read Victor Hugo. He uses every word in the dictionary and some others, and M. de Banville complains only, that he scans *liard*, contrary to precedent, as a dissyllable. Even a single poem like *Éviradnus* in the *Légende des Siècles*, carefully read, will accustom the reader's ear to a host of diphthongs, and educate it to feel instinctively what the pronunciation of analogous words must be. We give some lines from Part III. of this poem.

Où ? Dans l'*an-cien* manoir de Corbus. L'herbe verte,
Le *lier-re*, le *chien-dent*, l'*é-glan-tier* sauvageon,

* * * *

Meurt, comme sous la lèpre un *san-gli-er* malade

* * * *

Sur ces *vieux pier-riers* morts *vient* becqueter les mûres ;

* * * *

Il se refait avec les *con-vul-si-ons* sombres

* * * *

Avec l'éclair qui frappe et *fuit* comme un larron

* * * *

Une sorte de vie *effrayante* (pr. *ef-fré-iant'*) à sa taille.

* * * *

Répond au hurlement de *fan-vier* qui s'approche

* * * *

Oh ! les lugubres *nuits* ! Combats dans la *bru-ine* !

La *nu-é-e* attaquant, farouche, la *ru-ine* !

Un *ruis-sel-le-ment* vaste, affreux, *tor-ren-ti-el*,

Descend des profondeurs *fu-ri-eu-ses* du *ciel* ;

* * * *

Grondent et les *li-ons* de *pier-re* des remparts

* * * *

* * * *

Le tourbillon d'un *fouet* invisible hâté,

CHAPTER XI.

THE DIFFERENT VERSES POSSIBLE IN FRENCH.

VERSES may be made of any number of syllables from one to thirteen, but those of one, nine, eleven, and thirteen syllables are little used. A line of more than eight syllables requires a cæsure or pause on a given syllable of the line. Thus the Alexandrine or twelve-syllabled line has a cæsure at the sixth syllable, and the old epic verse of ten syllables is broken at the fourth syllable.

The cæsure may be formed in two ways : by a word of a masculine termination, whose last syllable is the syllable at which the cæsure ought to come, *e.g.*, the sixth syllable of an Alexandrine ; or by a word of feminine termination of Class I. or Class II. whose last sonorous syllable is the cæsure syllable, but only on condition that it is followed by an initial vowel or *h mute*, before which the final *e mute* can be elided. Thus, in the following three lines from Boileau's *Art Poétique*, ii. 140, the cæsure at the sixth syllable is formed in the first verse by the last syllable of the word *Gaulois* ; in the second by the last sonorous syllable of the word *asservie* (of Class II.), and in the third by the only sonorous syllable of the word *lustre* (of Class I.) ; while the final *e mutes* of *asservie* and *lustre* are elided before *à* and *au* respectively.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Le Rondeau, né <i>Gaulois</i> | a la naïveté. |
| La Ballade, <i>asservie</i> | à ses vieilles maximes, |
| Souvent doit tout son <i>lustre</i> | au caprice des rimes. |

Two other forms were admitted, the first in very ancient times, the second till the sixteenth century, but are now quite passed out of use. In the first the cæsura syllable was occupied by the last sonorous syllable of a word of any feminine termination, and the final mute syllable was suppressed, whether before a vowel or consonant, as in this line from the *Chanson de Roland*:—

De douce France, || des hommes de son lign

where the mute syllable of *France* does not count at all, though followed by a consonant. This seems reasonable enough, as the object of the cæsura is to relieve the ear in a long verse by a pause imitating the end of a line, and in some sort making two lines out of one. Now, at the end of a line, it would make no difference whether *France* were followed by an initial vowel or consonant. However, this kind of cæsura has long been abandoned.

The other obsolete form, which does not seem much to be regretted, is that of which examples were given on page 69, where the actual cæsura syllable is occupied by a final mute syllable.

It may be observed generally, that in grouping verses of different lengths, even-syllabled lines without cæsura are more commonly united with other even-syllabled lines, and odd with odd. Lines that have a cæsura are most readily combined with short lines of the same length as one of the

divisions formed by the cæsure. However, combinations of other kinds are quite usual, and often very harmonious.

I. *Verses of one syllable* are uncommon, and their use by themselves, as in a sonnet by Paul de Rességuier, quoted by M. de Banville, degenerates into a mere *tour de force* :—

Fort
Belle,
Elle
Dort.
Sort
Frêle,
Quelle
Mort !

II. The peculiar characters of the other verses without cæsure are best studied in Victor Hugo's marvellous poem, *Les Djinns, Orientales*, xxviii. This piece, which the reader should not fail to master, is composed of fifteen stanzas of eight lines each. Each stanza has the same arrangement of rhymes, viz :—

1. f.
2. m.
1. f.
2. m.
3. f.
3. f.
3. f.
2. m.

The first stanza consists of two-syllabled lines, the second of three-syllabled, and so on up to the seventh; the eighth stanza consists of ten-syllabled lines with the cæsure at the fourth syllable. The last seven stanzas decrease in length in the same way as the first seven increase, so that the poem ends with a two-syllabled stanza as it began. This

arrangement represents the approach and departure of a swarm of the evil spirits called Djinns, under the form of a tempest.

Here are the first five stanzas, as specimens of lines of *two, three, four, five, and six* syllables :—

Murs, ville,
Et port.
Asile
De mort,
Mer grise
Où brise
La brise ;
Tout dort.

III.

Dans la plaine
Naît un bruit,
C'est l'haleine
De la nuit.
Elle brame,
Comme une âme
Qu'une flamme
Toujours suit.

IV.

La voix plus haute
Semble un grelot.
D'un nain qui saute
C'est le galop :
Il fuit, s'élance,
Puis en cadence
Sur un pied danse
Au bout d'un flot.

V.

La rumeur approche ;
L'écho la redit.
C'est comme la cloche
D'un couvent maudit ;

Comme un bruit de foule,
 Qui tonne et qui roule,
 Et tantôt s'écroule
 Et tantôt grandit.

VI.

Dieu ! la voix sépulchrale
 Des Djinns ! Quel bruit ils font !
 Fuyons sous la spirale
 De l'escalier profond !
 Déjà s'éteint ma lampe ;
 Et l'ombre de la rampe,
 Qui le long du mur rampe,
 Monte jusqu'au plafond.

VII. *Verses of seven syllables* are very common, especially in combination with shorter lines.

In the following song from Victor Hugo's *Quatre Vents de l'Esprit, Livre Lyrique*, the refrain contains one line of two syllables ; the rest are seven-syllabled :—

Proscrit, regarde les roses ;
 Mai joyeux de l'aube en pleurs
 Les reçoit toutes écloses :
 Proscrit, regarde les fleurs.

Je pense
 Aux roses que je semai ;
 Le mois de Mai sans la France,
 Ce n'est pas le mois de Mai.

Proscrit, regarde les tombes ;
 Mai, qui rit aux cieux si beaux,
 Sous les baisers des colombes
 Fait palpiter les tombeaux.

Je pense
 Aux yeux chers que je fermai.
 Le mois de Mai sans la France,
 Ce n'est pas le mois de Mai.

Proscrit, regarde les branches,
Les branches où sont les nids ;
Mai les remplit d'ailes blanches
Et de soupirs infinis.

Je pense
Aux nids charmants où j'aimai.
Le mois de Mai sans la France,
Ce n'est pas le mois de Mai.

The following form of stanza invented by Ronsard or his school is very beautiful. It is composed of six lines : the third and sixth are of seven syllables, and rhyme together ; the first is of seven syllables and rhymes with the second, which is of three syllables ; the fourth and fifth rhyme together and correspond in length to the first and second :—

Rime, écho qui prends la voix
Du hautbois
Ou l'éclat de la trompette,
Dernier adieu d'un ami
Qu'à demi
L'autre ami de loin répète ;

SAINT-BEUVE, *Poésies de Joseph Delorme.*

VIII. *The eight-syllabled line without cæsura* has the reputation of being the easiest and freest verse, and used by itself forms the commonest of all lyric metres. It was in early times also used in comedy.

Si nous sommes une statue
Sculptée à l'image de Dieu,
Quand cette image est abattue,
Jetons-en les débris au feu.

Toi, forme immortelle, remonte
Dans la flamme aux sources du beau,
Sans que ton argile ait la honte
Et les misères du tombeau.

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER, *Émaux et Carnées.*

IX. *The eight-syllabled line with a cæsura at the fourth syllable* is more vigorous, and is to be preferred, especially in combination with lines of four syllables :—

Dans un baiser || l'onde au rivage

Dit ses douleurs.

Pour consoler || la fleur sauvage,

L'aube a des pleurs.

Le vent du soir || conte sa plainte

Au vieux cypès,

La tourterelle || au térébinthe

Ses longs regrets.

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER, *Poésies*.

X. *The nine-syllabled line with two cæsuras, one at the third, and the other at the sixth syllable*, is a favourite metre in opera libretto, and has a detestable jingle. Here are two average lines from the opera of the *Noces de Figaro* :—

Oiselet || échappé || de ta cage,

Laisse en paix || les minois || alentour.

However, it cannot be absolutely passed over in silence, on account of the burden of *Malbrouck* :—

Mironton ! || Mironton ! || Mirontaine,

which Victor Hugo has imitated in the *Châtiments*.

XI. M. de Banville has invented a pretty *nine-syllabled line with a cæsura at the fifth syllable* :—

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Mais l'ombre toujours | | entend frémir |
| Ta plainte qui meurt | | comme étouffée, |
| Et tes verts roseaux | | tout bas gémir, |
| Fleuve qu'a rougi | | le sang d'Orphée. |

Petit Traité de Poésie Française.

XII. *The ten-syllabled line with the cæsura at the fourth*

syllable is the earliest and only truly epic French line, and is equally suitable for lyric poetry. To the English ear it adapts itself more readily than any other, but the modern French prefer the Alexandrine.

| | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Il connaîtra | | qu'Amour est sans raison, |
| Un doux abus, | | une belle prison, |
| Un vain espoir, | | qui de vent nous vient pâlre ; |

| | | |
|------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Il connaîtra | | que l'homme se déçoit, |
| Quand, plein d'erreur, | | un aveugle il reçoit |
| Pour sa conduite, | | un enfant pour son maître. |

RONSARD, *Sonnet*.

XIII. *The ten-syllabled verse with a cæsura at the fifth syllable* is purely lyric :—

| | | |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| J'ai dit à mon cœur, | | à mon faible cœur ; |
| N'est-ce point assez | | d'aimer sa maitresse ? |
| Et ne vois-tu pas | | que changer sans cesse, |
| C'est perdre en désirs | | le temps de bonheur ? |

A. DE MUSSET, *Chanson*.

This kind of ten-syllabled verse combines admirably with lines of five syllables, as in the refrain of Victor Hugo's *Chasseur Noir*. Here is a less known and very fine passage from M. Sully-Prudhomme :—

Vous qui m'aiderez || dans mon agonie
 Ne me dites rien :
 Faites que j'entende || un peu d'harmonie,
 Et je mourrai bien

La musique apaise, || enchante, et délîe
 Des choses d'en bas ;
 Bercez ma douleur, || je vous en supplie,
 Ne lui parlez pas,

Je suis las des mots, || je suis las d'entendre
 Ce qui peut mentir :
 J'aime mieux les sons || qu'au lieu de comprendre
 Je n'ai qu'à sentir.
 Une mélodie, || où l'âme se plonge,
 Et qui sans effort
 Me fera passer || du délire au songe,
 Du songe à la mort.

L'Agonie.

XIV. The verse of *eleven syllables with a cæsure at the fifth syllable* is chiefly known to the present generation through M. de Banville's excursion into this unfrequented region. It is pretty enough, partaking of the nature of XIII. and XV.

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Les zéphyrs sont pleins | | de leur voix étouffée, |
| Et parfois un pâtre, | | attiré par le cor, |
| Aperçoit au loin | | Viviane la fée |
| Sur le vert coteau | | peignant ses cheveux d'or. |

Petit Traité de Poésie Française.

XV. The famous *Alexandrine*, or *verse of twelve syllables with a cæsure at the sixth syllable*, has become to the modern French the sole vehicle of epic, dramatic, and sustained narrative, or satiric poetry, in the form of couplets or *rimes plates*. It is also admitted into sonnets, and most other forms of lyric poetry, generally in quatrains, or in combination with shorter verses.

The *Alexandrine couplet* has two distinct forms : the classic of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the Romantic of the nineteenth century.

Boileau is the master, though not the good genius, of the classic *Alexandrine couplet*, of which Corneille and Racine are the models. In this form of verse, as already mentioned,

there must be pauses of sense at the cæsuras and the end of the first line of each couplet, and a more decided break at the end of the second verse; and all other breaks are avoided. The Romantic Alexandrine couplet of Victor Hugo is free from these rules, and differs from Racine's in the same sort of way that Mr. Morris's heroic couplets differ from Pope's. However, the question is one of type rather than of hard and fast distinction. Most of the classic poets occasionally use *enjambement* (overflowing of the sense of one verse into the next), weak cæsura, and extra pauses, at least in comic passages, as in Racine's comedy, *Les Plaideurs*. And, on the other hand, the extent to which modern couplets depart from the classic form varies with the subject. For specimens of classic and Romantic Alexandrine couplets, see pp. 58, 59.

Alexandrine quatrains do not generally deviate very much from the classic form, as the change of rhyme varies them sufficiently; they catch the English ear much more readily than Alexandrine couplets, especially if the rhymes are crossed (*croisées*). Unfortunately, the Alexandrine Romantic couplet, in which the greatest part of Victor Hugo's poetry is written, happens to be the form of verse to which the English ear is with most difficulty accustomed, as the weak cæsura does not give as much satisfaction as the strong to our national craving for an accent to rest on. One of the most famous examples of crossed quatrains in Alexandrines is Victor Hugo's "*La conscience humaine est morte;*" &c., in the *Châtiments*. The following is from M. Leconte de Lisle, who is one of the poets who use this form with most success:—

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| O vierge, qui d'un pan | de ta robe pieuse |
| Couvris la tombe auguste | où s'endormaient tes dieux : |
| De leur culte éclipsé | prêtresse harmonieuse, |
| Chaste et dernier rayon | détaché de leurs cieux ! |

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Je t'aime et te salue, | ô vierge magnanime ! |
| Quand l'orage ébranla | le monde paternel, |
| Tu suivis dans l'exil | cet Œdipe sublime, |
| Et tu l'enveloppas | d'un amour éternel. |

Hypatie. Poèmes Antiques.

The natural companion of the Alexandrine among shorter verses is that of six syllables, as in the famous :—

Mais elle était du monde, || où les plus belles choses
 Ont le pire destin,
 Et, rose, elle a vécu || ce que vivent les roses,
 L'espace d'un matin.

MALHERBE, Consolation (1599).

XVI. The verse of *thirteen syllables with a cæsure at the fifth foot* seems very “long drawn out,” since the second portion is equal to the longest verse that can be written without a cæsure. However, it is admitted here in deference to its patron, M. de Banville :—

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Le chant de l'orgie | avec des cris au loin proclame |
| Le beau Lysios, | le Dieu vermeil comme une flamme, |

Petit Traité de Poésie Française.

There seems to be no other kind of verse besides these sixteen, which can be said to have established its existence in French.

CHAPTER XII.

OF CERTAIN FIXED FORMS OF FRENCH POETRY.

EVEN the present little book would be incomplete without some account of the Ballade and other fixed forms, which have played such an important part in the history of French poetry, and are now being so generally naturalized among us by Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Lang, Mr. Gosse, Mr. John Payne, and others.

To save repetition, it may be stated that all the forms described in this chapter agree in two respects. In all, the lines must be of equal length throughout, and all in their strict form may be considered of French invention. The French Sonnet, however, is derived from the Italian sonnet, though not identical with it, and was not much used till the time of the Pleiad. The other forms are more purely French, and date from the Middle Ages.

Of sonnets in general it can perhaps only be said, that they are poems of fourteen lines of any length, and contain two quatrains or stanzas of four lines each.

The regular French sonnet, however, is of one absolutely determined form. It is a poem of fourteen lines of any length divided into two parts, the first of eight, the second of six lines. The first eight lines have neither more nor less than two rhymes, and are disposed in two quatrains in the following order:—

1.

2.

2.

1.

1.

2.

2.

1.

So far there is no difference between the French regular sonnet and its parent, the Italian regular sonnet. .

But the arrangement of the next three rhymes of the Italian regular sonnet, viz.:—

3.

4.

5.

is contrary to the French rules stated in Chapter V. It would have been possible to have chosen that Italian form, in which the last six lines are written on two rhymes only. But this arrangement is hostile to the very essence of the sonnet, which is, that the six last lines should seem longer than the first eight. To produce this effect, it is important that there should be three rhymes at the end to set against the two of the quatrains. Now, given the three rhymes and the rules of French versification, it was necessary that the last six lines should begin or end with a couplet. A final couplet, however, altogether overthrows the peculiar structure of the true sonnet, because it forces the preceding four lines into alliance with the two quatrains, so that the poem divides at the end of the twelfth instead of the eighth line. The couplet was therefore put immediately after the quatrains, and the remaining four lines crossed, to give as much of the

effect of the triply-crossed Italian rhymes as possible. So that the formula of the French regular sonnet stands thus :—

1.

2.

2.

1.

1.

2.

2.

1.

3.

3.

4.

5.

4.

5.

This sonnet has been not unfrequently used in English. It should be noticed, however, that this form is really incompatible with the distinction of the two tercets. The French regular sonnet ends, in fact, with a quatrain, and the division between the eleventh and twelfth lines is merely typographical.

In order to remind the reader that sonnets may be written in lines of any length, one in lines of four syllables is given as the example of a regular sonnet :—

1. Sur la colline,
2. Quand la splendeur
2. Du ciel en fleur
1. Au soir décline,
1. L'air illumine
2. Le front rêveur
2. D'une lueur
1. Triste et divine.

3. Dans un beau ciel,
3. O Gabriel !
4. Tel tu rayonnes ;
5. Telles encor
4. Sont les madones
5. Dans les fonds d'or.

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE.

The five rhymes here are *ine, eur, iel, onnes, or*, and they are arranged in the regular order.

The following is a fine specimen of an irregular sonnet. The only irregularity in this case is in the last two rhymes, which are arranged thus :—

- 4.
- 5.
- 5.
- 4.

The poet, Joachim du Bellay, was the friend of Ronsard. It is written in Alexandrines :—

Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage,
Ou comme cestui-là qui conquiert la toison,
Et puis est retourné, plein d'usage et raison,
Vivre entre ses parents le reste de son âge !

Quand reverrai-je, hélas ! de mon petit village
Fumer la cheminée, et en quelle saison
Reverrai-je le clos de ma pauvre maison,
Qui m'est une province, et beaucoup d'avantage ?

Plus me plaît le séjour qu'ont bâti mes aïeux
Que des palais romains le front audacieux ;
Plus que le marbre dur me plaît l'ardoise fine,

Plus mon Loire gaulois que le Tibre latin,
Plus mon petit Liré que le mont Palatin
Et plus que l'air marin la douceur angevine.

The ballade has nothing to do with our English ballad. The ballade now naturalized in English should always be written with a final *e*. Victor Hugo, who has never shown much inclination for artificial poetry, gave the name of ballades to some of his earlier ballad poems. But the two words ought to be kept quite distinct.

The ballade is a collection of a number of stanzas called *huitains* or *dizains*, written on the same rhymes, and each terminated by the same line or burden. The regular ballade, which is far the commonest, consists of three *huitains*, or three *dizains*, followed by a half-stanza with the same burden, addressing the person to whom the ballade is dedicated by some such title as *prince, sire, reine, dame*. This half-stanza, which is written on the same rhymes as the last halves of the *huitains* or *dizains*, as the case may be, is called the *envoi*.

It remains to explain what *huitains* and *dizains* are. A *huitain* is a stanza of eight lines of eight syllables, or of ten syllables, with a *cæsura* at the fourth syllable. However, only eight-syllabled *huitains* are used in ballades. The rhymes in a *huitain* are three, arranged as follows :—

- 1.
- 2.
- 1.
- 2.
- 2.
- 3.
- 2.
- 3.

A *dizain* is a stanza of ten lines of ten syllables, with a *cæsura* at the fourth syllable. Eight-syllabled *dizains* are

rare, and not used in ballades. A dizain has four rhymes, arranged as follows :—

1.

2.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

3.

4.

Here is a ballade of dizains, that written by Villon when he was under sentence of death. It must be remembered that in the fifteenth century the rules against hiatus, and about *e* *mutes* unsupported by consonants, and the arrangement of masculine and feminine verses, with which modern ballades must comply, were not in existence. The four rhymes are *vez*, *cis*, *rie*, and *oudre*.

1. Frères humains, qui après nous vivez

2. N'ayez les cœurs contre nous endurcis ;

1. Car, si pitié de nous pauvres avez,

2. Dieu en aura plutôt de vous mercis.

2. Vous nous voyez ci-attachés, cinq, six ;

3. Quant de la chair, que trop avons nourrie,

3. Elle est pièce dévorée et pourrie ;

4. Et nous, les os, devenons cendre et poudre.

3. De notre mal personne ne s'en rie ;

Burden. 4. Mais priez Dieu, que tous nous veuille absoudre.

1. Si vous clamons frères, pas n'en devez

2. Avoir dédain, quoique fûmes occis

1. Par justice ; toutefois vous savez

2. Que tous hommes n'ont pas bon sens assis.

2. Intercédez doncques de cœur rassis

3. Envers le Fils de la Vierge Marie ;
3. Que sa grâce ne soit pour nous tarie ;
4. Nous préservant de l'infemale foudre.
3. Nous sommes morts. Ame ne nous harie ;
- Burden. 4. Mais priez Dieu, que tous nous veuille absoudre.

1. La pluie ¹ nous a débués et lavés,
2. Et le soleil desséchés et noircis ;
1. Pies, corbeaux, nous ont les yeux cavés,
2. Et arrachés la barbe et les sourcis.
2. Jamais, nul temps, nous ne sommes rassis,
3. Puis ça, puis là, comme le vent varie,
3. A son plaisir, sans cesse il nous charrie,
4. Plus becquetés d'oiseaux, que dés à coudre.
3. Hommes, ici n'usez de moquerie,
- Burden. 4. Mais priez Dieu, que tous nous veuille absoudre.

ENVOI.

3. Prince Jésus, qui sur tous seigneurie,
3. Garde qu'enfer n'ait de nous la maistrie,
4. A lui n'ayons que faire, ne que soudre.
3. Ne soyez donc de notre confrérie,
- Burden. 4. Mais priez Dieu, que tous nous veuille absoudre.

The *Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis*, which Villon wrote in huitains, is even better known in England, thanks to Mr. Rossetti. The three rhymes are *is*, *aine*, and *an*. In Villon's time *ai* and *oi* were assonant, as has been said before. This particular ballade conforms as much to the

¹ This line affords a curious instance of the ineptitude of literary revision. Clément Marot, half a century after Villon, was probably offended by the license of scanning *pluie* as a monosyllable before a consonant. Accordingly his revised version is—

La pluie nous || a bués et lavés.

The new line is inferior to the old, as the cæsura between *nous* and *a* is very harsh. But the fun of the thing is, that Marot has not saved the line by the change. For “*enfin Malherbe vint*,” and *pluie* is forbidden altogether before a consonant. A warning to all revisers. •

modern rules about masculine and feminine rhymes as a ballade of huitains can, for if each huitain taken by itself observes the rules, then two huitains following one another must bring together two different rhymes of the same class (in this case two different masculine rhymes). However, the rule is not so strict between different stanzas, as in couplets or in the interior of a stanza. Still, after the establishment of the rules, the ballade of huitains would probably not have been invented, though the rules coming afterwards have not caused its banishment.

1. Dites-moi où, n'en quel pays,
2. Est Flora la belle Romaine,
1. Archipiada, ne Thaïs
2. Qui fut sa cousine germaine ?
2. Écho parlant quand bruit ou mène
3. Dessus rivière, ou sus étang,
2. Qui beauté eut trop plus d'humaine ?
- Burden. 3. Mais où sont les neiges d'antan ?

1. Où est la très-sage Héloïs,
2. Pour qui fut châtré et puis moine
1. Pierre Esbaillart à Saint-Denis ?
2. Pour son amour eut cette essoine.
2. Semblablement où est la Reine,
3. Qui commanda que Buridan
2. Fût jeté, en un sac, en Seine ?

Burden. 3. Mais où sont les neiges d'antan ?

1. La Reine blanche comme un lis,
2. Qui chantait à voix de Sirène,
1. Berthe au grand pied, Biétris, Allys,
2. Harembouges, qui tint la Maine,
2. Et Jeanne la bonne Lorraine,
3. Qu'Anglais brûlèrent à Rouen ;
2. Où sont-ils, Vierge souveraine ?

Burden. 3. Mais où sont les neiges d'antan ?

ENVOI.

2. Prince, n'enquerez de semaine,
 3. Où elles sont, ne de cet an,
 2. Que ce refrain ne vous remène :
 Burden. 3. Mais où sont les neiges d'antan ?

A rondeau is a poem of thirteen lines of either of the two sorts used in ballades. It is written on two rhymes, and divided into three stanzas or *strophes*. (The French word *stance* has often a depreciatory meaning, and is applied rather to songs and *vers de société*.)

The order of rhymes and stanzas is as follows :—

1.
 1.
 2.
 2.
 1.
 1.
 1.
 2.
 Refrain.
 1.
 1.
 2.
 2.
 1.
 Refrain.

The unique peculiarity of the rondeau is its refrain, which consists simply of the first few words. This refrain (generally of four syllables in ten-syllabled, and two in eight-syllabled rondeaux) is added after the second and third stanzas, without counting as a masculine or feminine verse or rhyming at all. The virtue of a rondeau is in its refrain,

which should be introduced naturally, and with some variety of sense. The refrain may even be used punningly.

In the following rondeau the lines are of ten syllables, with cæsura at the fourth syllable. Eight-syllabled rondeaux have exactly the same arrangement, except that (as has been said) their refrain has generally only two syllables.

1. Au bon vieux temps, un train d'amour régnaît,

1. Qui sans grand art et dons se promenait,

2. Si qu'un bouquet donné d'amour profonde,

2. C'était donner toute la terre ronde ;

1. Car seulement au cœur on se prenait.

1. Et si par cas à jouir on venait,

1. Savez-vous bien comme on s'entretenait ?

2. Vingt ans, trente ans ; cela durait un monde

Au bon vieux temps.

1. Or est perdu ce qu'amour ordonnait,

1. Rien que pleurs feints, rien que ruses on n'ait ;

2. Qui voudra donc qu'à aimer je me fonde,

2. Il faut premier que l'amour on refonde,

1. Et qu'on la mène ainsi qu'on la menait

Au bon vieux temps.

Mr. Swinburne's English roundels are rondeaux, though they do not always conform to the strict type.

The word rondel is another form of the word rondeau, just as *pel* is the Guernsey-French, and was good French for *peau*. Originally a rondeau or rondel meant almost any kind of short poem with a refrain. Now that the name rondeau is limited to the form just described, the parallel word rondel is also limited to a poem of thirteen eight-syllabled lines in three stanzas, written on two rhymes in the following order :—

1.

2.

2.

1.

1.

2.

First line repeated.

Second line repeated.

1.

2.

2.

1.

First line repeated.

Charles of Orleans, father of Louis XII., is the chief authority for rondels, and the following one is the best known of his. Of modern rondels it may be said, that there are few to be recommended. There is nothing easier than to write a bad rondel, nor harder than to write a good one. The limits are so very strict, that modern subtlety has not room to move in them as in the sonnet, ballade, or rondeau; and *naïveté*; which Boileau should have attributed to the rondel rather than to the rondeau, is more easily admired or regretted than recalled.

LE RENOUVEAU.

1. Le temps a laissé son manteau

2. De vent, de froidure et de pluie,

2. Et s'est vêtu de broderie,

1. De soleil luisant, clair et beau.

1. Il n'y a bête ni oiseau

2. Qu'en son jargon ne chante ou crie,

(First verse repeated.) "Le temps a laissé son manteau

(Second verse repeated.) De vent, de froidure et de pluie."

1. Rivière, fontaine et ruisseau
2. Portent, en livrée jolie,
2. Gouttes d'argent d'orfaverie,
1. Chacun s'habille de nouveau,

(First verse repeated.) Le temps a laissé son manteau.

There is not room to give more than the definition of the triolet, villanelle, and chant royal, the remaining native French forms of any importance.

A triolet is not a poem, but merely a stanza of eight short equal lines, generally beginning with a masculine verse, and arranged on two rhymes in the following order :—

1.

2.

1.

First verse repeated.

1.

2.

First verse repeated.

Second verse repeated.

A villanelle is a poem of an indefinite number of tercets beginning with a feminine verse, and written on two rhymes. Each tercet has its rhymes in the following order :—

1.

2.

1.

The third verse of the second, fourth, sixth, &c., tercets is the first verse of the poem repeated. The third verse of the third, fifth, seventh, &c., tercets is the third verse of the poem repeated. The last stanza is a quatrain, instead of a tercet, in the following form :—

1.

2.

First verse of the poem repeated.

Third verse of the poem repeated.

The chant royal is a sort of enlarged and grandiose ballade, chiefly used by C. Marot, addressed to a divinity or king. It consists of five stanzas of eleven lines of ten syllables, with the cæsure at the fourth syllable. All the stanzas are written on the same rhymes, and terminated by the same line, as in a ballade, and they are followed by an envoi of five lines written on the same rhymes as the last five of every stanza, and ending with the same line. The stanza has five rhymes in the following order:—

1.

2.

1.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

5.

4.

Burden. 5.

In modern French the chant royal has not been so much patronized as the other indigenous forms. Mr. Gosse has written a fine English chant royal with the burden—

And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON SOME MISCELLANEOUS POINTS OF PRONUNCIATION, DICTION, AND STYLE.

ONE of the difficulties in the way of an Englishman's appreciating French poetry is the treatment of words and names from his own and other accented languages. Words from German, English, Italian, Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, if pronounced with the proper accent, are essentially incompatible with French in a way that they are not with other languages. Accordingly, they are in French verse deprived of the tonic accent, and pronounced as far as possible as if they were French words of similar spelling, except that final consonants are usually sounded. Thus, since *ei* in *peine* = a short *open e*, *ei* in *Heine* is pronounced in the same way. The *au* in *Faust* is treated as *ô*, and so is the *o* in *lost*, and accordingly these words can rhyme.

Tom, qu'un abandon scandalise,
Récite Love's Labour Lost ;
Et Fritz explique à Cydalise
Le Walpurgisnachtstraum de Faust.

TH. GAUTIER, *Émaux et Camées*.

The *e mute* of English, which is now a mere typographical sign, and the atonic final *e* of German, which is more of a syllable than the French *e mute*, are both assimilated entirely to *e mute*. Thus *Love's* is a dissyllable in the stanza just

quoted, and *Gladstone* counts as three syllables in the following couplet :—

Personne pour toi. Tous sont d'accord. Celui-ci,
Nommé *Gladstone*, dit à tes bourreaux : Merci.

V. HUGO, *L'Année Terrible*.

In Latin, short *e* counts as *é*, *um* as *omm*, and the vowels are generally nasalized before *n*, as in the ordinary French school-boy pronunciation.

One result of the removal of the tonic accent is, that final syllables, which would be quite atonic in their own language, are made to bear the cæsure and rhyme. Baudelaire even goes so far as to write rhymes in Latin on French principles, so that *ludis* rhymes with *cordis*, and the lines are counted by syllables instead of beats.

Les anges effarés viennent voir notre cage,
Et se disent : “ Vois donc celui-ci, celui-là,
Voici Tibère, une hydre au fond d'un marécage,
Regarde le *Malthus* || auprès de l'Attila.”

V. HUGO, *Quatre Vents de l'Esprit*.

The following lines are all out of the *Châtiments* :—

Tout ! la fois, le serment que Dieu tient sous sa garde,
Le saint temple où mourant tu dis *Introïbo* ;
Ils livrent tout, pudeur, vertu ! martyr, regarde,
Rouvre tes yeux, qu'emplit la lueur du tombeau.

* * * * *

Ils vendent ses genoux meurtris, sa palme verte,
Sa plaie au flanc, son œil tout baigné d'infini,
Ses pleurs, son agonie, et sa bouche entr'ouverte,
Et le cri qu'il poussa : *Lamma Sabacthani*.

i. 8.

Nous nous promenions parmi les décombres

A *Rozel-Tower*,

Et nous écoutions les paroles sombres

Que disait la mer.

vi. 4.

Qui jouait dans les *Hosanna*

* * * *

La pantomime d'*Iéna*.

vii. 2.

These illustrations could be indefinitely multiplied from poets of every time and school.

Inversion was frequent, as in English, with early poets, but since the Romantic movement it is looked on as a weakness. The only pretty modern inversion is that of the adjective and substantive, or adverb and verb, as *verts roseaux* for *roseaux verts*, and *tout bas gémir* for *gémir tout bas*, in the line—

Et tes verts roseaux tout bas gémir,

quoted p. 90.

Inversion of phrases is never a beauty.

Alliteration has not been so common as in English, and Baudelaire's abundant use of it, which is nothing like Mr. Swinburne's in English, was looked on by his countrymen as an Anglicism. It must be remembered that resonant rhyme implies a certain necessary modicum of alliteration, so to speak, and also that there was never a distinct poetry of pure alliteration, as in mediæval England. However, every school of French verse has furnished fine examples of this ornament.

Je vais les déplorer. Va, cours, vole, et nous venge.

CORNEILLE, *Cid*, i. 3.

Oui, prince, je languis, je brûle pour Thésée.

Je l'aime ; non point tel que l'ont vu les enfers,

Volage adorateur de mille objets divers,

Qui va du dieu des morts déshonorer la couche ;

Mais fidèle, mais fier, et même un peu farouche,

Charmant, jeune, traînant tous les cœurs après soi,
Tel qu'on dépeint nos dieux, ou tel que je vous voi.

RACINE, *Phèdre*, ii. 5.

Sache qu'il faut aimer sans faire la grimace
Le pauvre, le méchant, le tortu, l'hébété,
Pour que tu puisses faire à Jésus, quand il passe,
Un tapis triomphal avec ta charité.

BAUDELAIRE, *Le Rebelle*.

Nous voulons voyager sans vapeur et sans voile !
Faites, pour égayer l'ennui de nos prisons,
Passer sur nos esprits, tendus comme une toile,
Vos souvenirs avec leurs cadres d'horizons.

BAUDELAIRE, *La Mort*.

The *repetition of whole syllables* is a more dangerous artifice, but it is very happily employed by Sainte-Beuve in the stanza quoted in Chapter XI., where the return of the syllable *mi*, after it has been used twice to rhyme, has a most pathetic effect. So Alfred de Musset in *Rolla*:—

Dors-tu content, *Voltaire*, et ton hideux sourire
Voltige-t-il encor sur tes os décharnés ?

The history of *poetic diction* is much the same in France and England, except that the substitution of circumlocutions and stiff synonyms for the *mot propre* went much farther under Boileau than under Pope. An English audience would never have been as easily shocked as the first French audience which heard the word *mouchoir* instead of *tissu fatal*, or *bandeau funeste*, or *nœuds cruels*, in a version of *Othello*. Moreover, the tyranny lasted longer in France, from Malherbe to Victor Hugo, instead of from Dryden to Wordsworth, or about two centuries instead of one. On the

other hand, the French at least did attain some valuable results by what we may consider a disproportionate sacrifice. Racine is more urbane and refined than Victor Hugo, as well as more monotonous and limited ; whereas Dryden and Pope and Johnson are coarser than Wordsworth, for all their *orbs* and *steeds* and *swains*. There is a distinct danger, too, in the use of technical words in poetry, as when eyes are said to be *perçants comme une vrille*, as sharp as a gimlet !

A striking peculiarity of nineteenth century French poetry is its *picturesqueness*. M. de Banville goes so far as to maintain that the poet can only describe what he has *seen*. This arises in some measure, as we have suggested, from the language lending itself readily to plastic treatment, through its want of accent. Much also is due to the fact that French poets of this century have generally been, or at least lived among sculptors and painters. With the great exception of Victor Hugo, they have kept aloof from politics, and perhaps logically interpreting contempt for politics to include contempt for history, they have lived chiefly in an atmosphere of their own. Mr. Arnold has called this attitude "living in an inn." Consequently patriotic and historic subjects are of much less importance than with us, and, except by Victor Hugo and M. Leconte de Lisle, are chiefly abandoned to popular verse, between which and literary verse there is a much wider gulf than in other countries. There is, therefore, a weak side of artificiality, affectation, and narrow-mindedness about much modern French verse.

On the other hand, unlike some English verse, it always can be scanned and construed, it calls everything by its

right name, and has all the national clearness and precision. Even such a passage as the much abused lines—

Ne crois pas qu'au magique espoir du corridor
J'offre ma coupe vide où souffre un monstre d'or !
Ton apparition ne va pas me suffire :
Car je t'ai mis, moi-même, en un lieu de porphyre.

is only unmeaning, not obscure ; the grammar and arrangement are correct and simple enough.

Classic French poetry is generally superior to the poetry of the corresponding English school in finish and elegance. The great charm of Racine is in his tenderness and exquisite delicacy of touch. He is more Virgilian than any other poet in his excellences and weaknesses alike. The most unjust English prejudice against him is that countenanced by Macaulay—that his characters are all French courtiers of Louis XIV. On the same page Macaulay complains, very inconsistently, that his characters are mere names. The truth is, that the diction of Racine's characters is that of Racine's contemporaries ; but this diction is much more applicable to general dramatic purposes than the very peculiar, transient, and affected language of the age in which Shakespeare lived. On the other hand, the characters in *Andromaque* are as distinct as need be, only they do not announce themselves to a careless and superficial reader by separate catch-words, such as English readers are too much accustomed to, though of little more artistic value than the explanations under a child's drawing. And the manner in which the catastrophe is evolved, purely out of the conflicting passions of the actors, is too refined for tastes that crave for the strong intellectual meat of drums, processions, battles, explosions, patent stage

thunder and rain, dinner parties, cigars, and expensive changes of raiment and scenery.

However, the classic Alexandrine couplet is not the form of French verse which should be set before English readers first, as it generally is, and that without any explanation. The decasyllabic, octosyllabic, and shorter verses should be read before Alexandrines, and Alexandrine quatrains before Alexandrine couplets. The Romantic Alexandrine couplet should be approached last of all, unless, perhaps, the *vers libres* of La Fontaine's *Fables*, which, again, being the most difficult and subtle of French metres, are often recklessly offered to English children with no explanation.

What, indeed, is the usual course of education in England as regards French verse? Girls are taught to repeat, *as prose*, a few scraps of Racine and Lamartine detached from the context, and boys are set to translate *Tartuffe*, with the remark that it must be inferior to *L'Avare*, as it is in verse. In nine cases out of ten the teacher cannot scan the lines him or herself; and, in the tenth, he or she does not take the trouble to explain the scansion. So taught, pupils pick up a few ready-made falsisms on the subject from Macaulay or the newspaper, and settle down into the comfortable belief that there is no French poetry worth reading. If Greek were taught in the same way as French, would not the newspapers give us the same jokes about *Œdipus Coloneus*, that they now lavish on *Horace* or *Athalie*?

And yet a knowledge of the rules of French Prosody, sufficient for the appreciation of the latter, can be acquired in a tenth of the time necessary to assure ourselves, that we can have no approximate idea of how Sophocles would have pronounced the former.

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